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LETTERS FROM A
SETTLEMENT



WIVES AND WASHING.

LETTERS FROM A SETTLEMENT

BY

A. L. HODSON

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON
EDWARD ARNOLD

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TO

MY MOTHER

THIS LITTLE BOOK IS

LOVINGLY DEDICATED

PREFACE

• IN these days, when people are beginning to realise that to help the poor is not as easy as it sounds, and that some, so-called, charitable work does more harm than good, Settlements have been founded in order that those who wish to help others may learn to do so in the best way.

There is, for instance, the well-educated girl who is not really wanted at home, and who would like to study social questions and do charitable work, had she not that uneasy feeling that she is both ignorant and incompetent.

To her a Settlement may be both a training-school and a centre for useful work. She will there be able to see how the poor really live, and in what their poverty consists ; but she will also be in touch with funds and

societies for the relief of all kinds of distress. Thus, having found out what evil and misery are round about her, she may study how best to supply a remedy ; and so, with the help of trained and skilful workers may do something to substitute health for disease, wealth for poverty.

If such a resident happens to be well off she will find many good ways of spending her money ; and if she has a large circle of friends she will be able to gain their sympathy with her doings, and possibly persuade them to join her.

If, on the other hand, she is obliged to earn her living, she will be able, in a short time, to find out what the work is like ; whether it really appeals to her ; and how much is required of her before she can earn a salary.

In either case she will find in a Settlement as much comfort as is good for her, and many interesting friends.

But in addition to these resident workers

there are many girls living at home who can easily give a day, or half a day, a week. For these there is interesting work to be done under experienced workers; or by undertaking to visit regularly, any girl who loves the poor may bring much happiness to some little people whose lives are a constant struggle with pain and discomfort.

But one word of warning. There are some ladies for whom a Settlement is not suitable—those, for instance, who, having quarrelled with all their relations and most of their friends, are in search of a Christian home, and a wide sphere of influence.

Or, again, the elderly dyspeptic lady who, with no training, but little education, and no money, is anxious—poor dear—for much sympathy, and work among the poor with a small salary.

Lastly, the spoilt child who, tired of her home life, which she finds monotonous and boring, thinks she would have a better time if she could get to London.

These would find the life too hard, the dirt and discomfort very real, and the company unsympathetic.

These letters, giving the writer's experiences of some of the simpler forms of charity, supply an answer to the oft-repeated question, What do you do at a Settlement? In publishing them, the author would introduce others to the work from which she gained far more than she was able to give.

I would here acknowledge my indebtedness, and express my gratitude, to Miss Dorothy Kempe for both criticism and encouragement.

A. L. H.

January 1909.

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LETTERS FROM A SETTLEMENT

I

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

AT last I have accomplished my object, and here I am, beginning to work in a Settlement. That there will be plenty to do I have already found out, and everything I see convinces me that the life will be absorbingly interesting, though, just at first, it takes a little getting used to. It is nice to feel, too, that although this is unpaid work, one is earning one's living, so to speak, in a business-like way.

You were quite right in thinking that father would be alarmed at the idea of a Settlement ; he certainly was rather disturbed at first, but he has been so good about it all.

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I wrote to both father and mother to ask for permission to come here, because a letter must be answered—there is no doubt about that ; whereas questions asked at home never seem to be treated seriously, and the answer can always be indefinite enough there to prevent any decided action.

I should very much like you to see father's letter ; I will show it you some day, for I am so proud of it ; it strikes me as being so broad-minded and tolerant. Of course the tone is very much the same as it was when I asked to go to Oxford ; I was told then that the ideal sphere for a woman is the home, and that to be a good wife ought to be the aim and object of every girl. I suppose all fathers want their daughters to marry, and though mine has the same conservative notions as the rest in this respect, I am thankful to say he does not also think it essential that a lady should be ignorant ; he very much prefers the clever, well-informed ones. I am so glad to have been brought

up in that atmosphere. What a lucky chance it was, to be sure !

I was rather afraid that this way of working among the poor would not appeal to him as much as visiting among the people in the village at home ; but he evidently thinks training is desirable, and that in London there is more opportunity to study social questions, as well as the giving of relief.

He seems to have a sort of dread of the average district visitor ; for, he says, they often do more harm than good by interfering, prying, and making the people servile and dependent. I do wonder what he has seen to make him speak so strongly ; he used always to talk with such respect of charitable ladies.

So he agreed that I should come here ; he pays my board, and I am to have what money I want "in reason."

• Mother seemed rather disappointed that I was not going home ; but she said she was quite pleased that I should be independent.

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She told me that when she was a girl she would have loved such a life, but the Fates decreed that she was to marry her handsome husband, and with him she has been more than happy.

It is a great comfort that she does not mind, for any real opposition would have been too much for me ; I should never have decided to come here against the wish of every one ; it would have made me miserable. Besides, I do not mean to say "good-bye" to my home at all ; I shall have the ordinary holidays three times a year, and an occasional Saturday to Monday : this is quite possible, for there are generally some short-time workers—that is, people who come for a month or two—and they will keep things going while you are away. Of course, ideally, from the point of view of the clerical work only, we ought to be here all the year round ; but I gather that no one does full time, for a summer holiday of four to six weeks is considered essential, in order that body and soul

may not be entirely worn out in two or three years.

The main idea of this place is that a number of ladies, who are more or less congenial to one another, should live together, partly as students, partly as workers, with the general intention of doing something to check obvious abuses, and of helping those who are in need of assistance. It is not necessarily religious work, though, of course, to religious people, that description of it is more accurate than any other. Some may prefer the social, others the educational part of the work ; therefore, each resident is asked what she prefers to do, and, if possible, she is allowed to do it. The training is evidently looked upon as a very important matter ; so important, that at first one is given very little to do in addition to the work it entails, so that there is time to look about and learn.

, I wonder whether you would say that the house is too full of people ; it certainly is full, but then so many of the residents are

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out, both in the day-time and in the evening, that you can often find an empty sitting-room, if you look for one.

At meal-times there is sometimes rather a rush, and one feels a little like being at a hotel. This is specially so at lunch-time, for all sorts of people who work in this district are glad to come in and get some food, instead of having to go westwards ; it is a great convenience to them, for it is quite a long way to a good confectioner's. It is very amusing and interesting to see them all, generally, but if you are very tired it is a little trying.

What one does realise here is the luxury of a bath. Most people agree that bathing is pleasant ; but they do not know what it means, after tramping about all day through London mud, in and out of dirty houses, after climbing dark and unspeakably dirty stairs, and shaking black, or sticky little hands, or after riding in many much-used omnibuses and trams, to plunge into hot soapy water, and get clean.

There is often keen though friendly competition for our cheerful bathrooms ; for, as every one knows who has lived with several people in a small house, the supply of hot water is by no means inexhaustible. I blush to think, in my sober senses, of the devices we plan for preventing that greedy resident who, having got the bath, keeps it for half-an-hour or so, and likes the water up to her chin, from getting possession. She is quite unconscious of any harm, nor does she suspect that we are playing tricks on her, poor dear ; she only considers that she is rather unlucky when, after patiently waiting, towels in hand, for a long time in the nearest sitting-room, she hears the bathroom door shut again almost before it has opened, and the water come splashing in, just when she thought it was running out. No doubt she fancies she has fallen asleep in the interval, but, as a matter of fact, we have been too quick for her.

When we have qualms of conscience about

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treating her in this way, we console ourselves with the knowledge that when she does slip in first—and she can be very quick if she tries—she has the best of times.

The housekeeping here is done as economically as possible, for although we pay fees, no one wants to pay more than is necessary, and subscriptions and donations, which are very difficult to raise, are wanted for rent, for repairs, and for various works with which we are connected. The staff of servants is, therefore, not large, and we are supposed to need as little waiting on as may be. The resident who sits up half the night, and then wants her breakfast in bed, is not encouraged in this manner of life; though how to discourage her is a difficult problem. One method of dealing with this habit is for the Head herself to carry up the breakfast of the lazy one before she has her own. This would drag me out of bed sooner than any other treatment, and I always pity the poor creature who is so tenderly waited on. It sounds

brutal to say so ; but I really think that, unless some such drastic treatment is resorted to, the number of late sleepers increases rapidly, and then the whole work of the house is delayed and hindered.

. I wish I had not had an auction of my odd things before I went down, for the cups and bread-and-butter plates would have been so useful here ; however, it is well to have left something behind, so that when I go back again I may be able to find some odd little treasure hidden away in my room.

I still can't help envying you, and half wishing I had never gone down, for I cannot tell you how great the contrast is between the life here and that at Oxford. While you grow wise in an atmosphere of studious repose, we live in a whirl, where quiet thought is almost an impossibility. While you are gazing on Nature and Art in their loveliest and most attractive forms, we see nothing but ugliness and bare utility. While you have beauty thrown at your feet, we have to study

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and plan how to make one or two spots where our eyes may dwell, and gain some refreshment of colour and form, instead of looking always into sordid lodging-houses, or London washing hung out to dry.

Still, there are many compensations ; one learns to look at life from an entirely different point of view. What I like about the place is that we are treated as ordinary mortals, and are expected to need proper and comfortable rest, decent food, a sufficiency of exercise, and some amusement, if we are to do the work really well ; therefore, it is not looked upon as great laziness and self-indulgence to read papers and books, to go to bed early, eat all the meals, and go to concerts and theatres when you have a chance.

Yet, on the other hand, we are all very anxious to do our work in the best way, and to be looked upon as reliable people who will do what they undertake, and do it well. I do not know whether you see anything attractive in this, but to me it is very fascinating.

Philanthropic people are, as a rule, apt to be swallowed up in good works, and to take no interest in other ideas and pursuits, with the result that they get into the way of thinking that they are not doing their duty when they are not at work.

Here, on the other hand, you are almost forced to take an interest in other people's affairs; and you are free to exercise your faculties, and even cultivate your talents if you have any, in addition to doing your work. This is more human, and it gives no encouragement to that frame of mind which takes note of other people's business in a small and critical way, rather than with a broad and tolerant interest. As the months go on I may alter my opinion and discover that the work requires all one's thoughts and energies. If so, then I think a Sisterhood, where talking is only occasional, would be more satisfying than a Settlement.

So much for first impressions!

II

LOOKING ROUND

TIME runs on, and I am beginning to get used to the life here. In some ways the first months were really very trying, much more so than I thought they would be.

In the first place, the noise is simply distracting. Trams and omnibuses go racing down the road all day, quite regardless of our poor nerves; they keep it up far into the night too, so that we, in the front rooms, have very little peace. After the trams have finished the market-carts begin, for in the very early hours they come up from the country to Covent Garden market. Thus, you see, the sound of the traffic never ceases.

I do not notice it half so much as I did at first, but I shall take the first offer that I get of a back room.

Then the dirt is so trying ; nothing is ever, really clean, for dust, fog, and smuts are continually depositing themselves, not only on obvious and convenient places, but even in the innermost recesses of your being ; it would be nice to walk about with a sponge, a can of water, and towel hung round the waist ; but as this is obviously impossible, the only thing is to go dirty, and take the top layer off whenever you have a chance.

But even worse than that, though this evil is fortunately only to be met with outside the house, is the smell of the streets, and of rooms which never have the windows open. As you walk along you literally feel the want of ventilation in those horrid rooms in the basement, whence odours of much-worn clothes, very questionable cooking, and human beings crowded into a small space, rise, in a moist stream, into the narrow streets. How people can live in that sort of atmosphere I can't think ; it is a comfort to find that the men and children spend most of their time either out of

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doors, or at the school or factory; they only have to eat and sleep at home; the mothers are the only ones who stay there all day, and I understand now why they drink and gossip. If any one needs a club, or a little amusement, it is these poor old mothers.

The other day I went, for the first time, into my district, with the grey lady who is to help me with the parochial side of my work. Oh, the dirt! You have no idea what it was like; we had to sit down, too, in the first house, and although the chairs were lightly flicked over with something that looked like a child's dress, yet I did not feel at all comfortable.

The sofa had been used for a bed, and when we called at about three o'clock in the afternoon it had not been made, or even stripped. Oh, the sheet and blanket! and, in fact, the whole thing!—it was indescribable.

On the table were two cups and saucers, an opened tin of condensed milk, a new loaf, two fresh herrings, butter, and what seemed to be the remains and crumbs of several meals. On

the hob was a dirty old metal teapot, which looked as if it lived there always, it was so smutty. Dinner plates, knives, forks, and spoons were piled up in a hopeless mess on a corner of this maid-of-all-work sort of table. In a corner of the room was at least one small baby in a cot, and I rather think there were two.

Fortunately the grey lady did the talking; I was only introduced, and had plenty of time to look round.

The only possible way to help that woman seemed to be to send a charwoman to thoroughly clean up the house. How could the family be decent in such surroundings, and could any decent person get a place into such a mess? I was quite thankful to say "good-bye" and breathe outside air again.

We went into two or three houses, all very dirty. I was wondering whether they were always like that, for if so, I know I should give offence at once by standing outside on the doorstep instead of going in and sitting down.

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The last visit was to quite a hovel, and in it lived a poor old woman all by herself; she had a body of seventy and a spirit of fifty, and though rather frail she seemed quite bright and cheery. My charming companion told me that she once accepted an invitation to tea with this decrepit old soul, and her account of it was too horrible for words. She told me that when she arrived the tea was not quite ready, and she saw a small boy come in with a haddock which was wrapped up in the pillow-case! How any one could eat a meal after that I can't imagine; she did, however, and I have looked at her with even more respect than I did before, ever since I heard that astounding tale.

On the whole, I found the afternoon depressing, for it seemed hopeless to visit these people and not offer to help them to clean up a little, and yet I suppose any suggestion that cleaning was necessary or desirable would give great offence.

After the visiting I went back to tea with the grey lady. There are two of these ladies

working in the parish where I am to visit, and as they come in from a distance they have a little snuggerly at the top of the schools where they can rest or write, or take tea when they feel disposed.

The preparations were quite simple, for they do everything themselves. In the room there is a gas-stove with a nice hot front flame which is excellent for cooking toast, a gas-ring for heating the kettle, a large cupboard to put teacups and many other things, and a little shutting-up apparatus for washing. Several people who have to do with the parish came in, and talked about their various works and seemed to enjoy the little tea-party very much.

Thank you very much for the message from Bobby; it is really sweet of him to be sorry I am not coming home for good, and I am more than grateful that he still does not look upon me as a New Woman, for I am sure those words present an awful picture to his mind.

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Please give him my love, and tell him I shall never forget the little lecture he once gave me on true womanliness. Between ourselves, I do hope that when he meets his ideal she will not be too sweetly womanly; for they do say that sweetness is apt to wear off, and then the womanly side becomes rather hysterical and tiresome. If you have a taste for the sweet womanly style, do take to sport in order to counteract its evil tendencies.

I hope you will come and see me here. There is a little guest-room, and if you were to come for a week you could see a great deal.

But perhaps you do not take to the idea, for this is not the West End, and there are no fascinating shops and carriages to look at; from that point of view it is distinctly dull, so do not come unless you would like to see the work.

I am getting a little bit used to the dirt and the smells, but on the whole it is a mistake to have a sensitive nose, or in fact

any sensitive organ. If only one could temporarily shut off one's senses, what a relief it would be; there is a fortune to be made by any one who would supply a temporary or local deadener for this purpose; one might carry a little of it in a bottle and apply it to eyes, nose, ear, or tongue as the case might be.

I can only hear of two rules. The first is that we are not to give help in money or kind directly; of course we may give through churches or societies, but not to the poor people whom we visit. The other is that each resident must take one complete day's holiday a week. This sounds simple enough, but as a matter of fact it is sometimes a very difficult rule to keep.

That it is really necessary one finds out more every day, for it gives us a chance to see people and things outside our own work, and that is really essential if we are to remain human beings, and not degenerate into neurotic bores.

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It is rather interesting to see the different ways people have of taking this day off. There are some who argue with themselves in this way. I do not want a day off, but as it is a rule I suppose I must have one. I shall not lose very much time if I have it on Sunday, and as I have no Sunday School class it will be quite easy to rest then. Such a person goes to church perhaps three times on Sunday, has a nap in the afternoon, and so considers that she has done her duty.

On the other hand there is the conscientious worker with a taste for amusements and the West End. To her, the need for change is obvious, and she not only takes a good day off, but she also makes profitable use of every little opportunity to go Westwards that her work affords her.

Then there is the Passive Resister. She, having a conscientious objection to such a rule, ignores it whenever possible.

Most of us, however, have friends whom we want to visit, and theatres and concerts

that we long to go to ; and these we save up until in our much-appreciated time off we are able, with a clear conscience, to rest or amuse ourselves as we feel inclined.

To-night I am going to the school-children's entertainment ; it begins at seven and goes on till about eleven. This sounds exhausting ; but I rather enjoy these little variety entertainments, for the children are never tired, and their light-hearted gaiety is infectious.

III

TRAINING

I THINK I told you about the house in my last letter, so now perhaps you would like to hear a little about the training.

Of course, strictly speaking, it is impossible to separate the training from the practical work ; I feel that, now that I am getting on a little, and am doing more than I was able to manage at first.

The unfortunate part of it is, that I find it so very difficult to apply the theories of relief, as taught by the C.O.S., to any of the practical cases that I come across ; as far as I can see, most of my poor and destitute ones are in that condition chiefly through some fault of their own, and are therefore not to be encouraged, or helped out of their difficulties, by grants of money or food. Of

course one sees the theoretical force of it all, but what is one to do next? That is the problem.

Did you ever realise, when you undertook to visit an old woman for the C.O.S., what sort of society those three letters stood for? I never did in the least, except that it was short for Charity Organisation Society, and I thought an old woman was a great bore. Here, it is part of our training to be instructed in the theories of that great society. I find them interesting, generally convincing, but a little paralysing.

I have been going for some time to one of the largest offices of the society, to do exactly what I am told, and to attend the committees. It is a most interesting place, and every sort of charitable and social work is studied there in a really up-to-date and scientific way; or, to describe it shortly, the scientific method is applied to charitable relief.

I am being trained by the secretary, and

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he is just splendid ; he never seems to mind how much trouble he takes, and he works like a nigger.

One thing I am learning to do is to write letters. These refer, somehow or other, to questions of relief or charity. Some of them are to make inquiries as to the character or circumstances of people who have applied for help and give references ; others, to School Board officers asking for reports on children and their homes ; some, to the clergy, for information about parishioners ; some are answers to other offices of the society who want inquiries made in our district ; others are requests to these offices to make similar inquiries for us, and so on.

You have no idea what numbers of things there are to write about.

The various letters to be written are sketched out by the secretary, and I have to listen, take notes, and then write the letters as well as I can. It really is most difficult ; and my memory has a trick of turning inside out at

the critical moment, so that all the contents are scattered to the four winds, and I have to ask for the points again. "Nerves" are, of course, responsible for this, and I hope that in time I shall be able to control my memory, or else make notes that are more to the point. Perhaps you do not know how difficult it is to write good business-like letters, asking exactly what you want to know, and giving the information required, without any unnecessary padding.

As all the letters are looked over by a secretary before they go to the post, mistakes are detected ; but to have a letter back to be rewritten is an awful disgrace, and one I am trying hard to avoid. Unfortunately, the treasurer sits in the office a great deal, and as he is surprisingly economical with the writing-paper, I have to tear up my spoiled sheets very quietly, so that he shall not be annoyed by so much waste.

The letters are not only looked over, but also copied, and the copy is kept for ever.

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Isn't that enough to make any one anxious to write well ?

Rather an interesting part of the study of letter-writing is to send a report of some case to people who are interested in it, and who will provide the money if we make inquiries, and do what seems desirable. Sometimes, if more than one member of a family has been helped, and assistance has gone on for some time, it is quite a difficult matter to make a good summary; to note the interesting points, the amount of money spent, and future requirements, without making too long a story. In such a letter there is an opening for sound judgment and real literary ability.

For those who have a taste for them, the accounts are an interesting study, and any one who wishes to be a fully trained C.O.S. secretary must be instructed in this part of the work. They are most carefully kept and are very elaborate; at present I have had nothing to do with them.

For the assistance of workers, all sorts of

interesting books of reference are provided, giving details of convalescent homes, hospitals, almshouses, friendly societies, clubs, and the like. Then there are reports on charity, thrift, the administration of the Poor Law, out-door relief, and so on; in fact, there is information on every subject which interests a social worker.

When any one is tired of sitting in the office there is always visiting to be done in connection with people who have asked for assistance. For this work I sometimes take a long round, and as it is difficult to remember all one has to do, I make elaborate preparations before starting.

In the first place, I make a list of the people, with notes as to the money to be given or the questions to be asked. I then make a rough plan of the route, for it saves much walking if one can take short-cuts; of course there are trams and omnibuses, but it is always annoying to have to go twice over the same ground.

These expeditions are not always pleasant,

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for there are sometimes awkward little matters to be inquired into. For instance, this afternoon I had to ask to see the pawn-tickets of a lady who was trying to look superior ; and it was not an easy matter. I hate the subject of pawn-tickets, but we hear much of them because quite respectable people "put the things away" when they are in low water ; and it is far cheaper, for instance, if one is sending a man away for convalescence, to get his own greatcoat out of pawn than to buy him a new one.

Then, again, it is sometimes agitating to have to persuade a hard-hearted daughter, who reports that she is very badly off, to contribute to the support of her old mother ; a very clever, tactful visitor can sometimes make a good impression under such circumstances, but the ordinary nervous amateur is apt to make the people abusive, and to find the door shut in her face. I have sometimes been spoken to most severely.

One of the reasons we are sent to the C.O.S.

is that we may study the evils of indiscriminate relief, and another, that we may learn how to treat various cases of distress adequately and with method.

I have often been told by charitable people that it is right to help all beggars at the door, as any one who turns one away may also turn away that coveted Angel who is said to come sometimes unawares. Such people always seemed to me a little selfish in their anxiety to offer hospitality to the Angel, and now I am learning that this is one form of that very undesirable "indiscriminate relief."

For training in method, the committees give one great opportunities. The persons composing these committees are clergy, district visitors, ministers, business men, and so on. The meetings take place twice a week, and then it is that one learns which of those who apply for relief are worthy of assistance, and in what way help can be most satisfactorily given. Every case is discussed in detail, and as there are Church people, Roman Catholics, Dis-

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senters, and, it may be, Agnostics, on the committee, you can understand that there is sometimes great difference of opinion as to the worthiness of the applicants, and the best way to help them.

Fortunately we have tea in the middle of the afternoon, and that soothes our nerves.

I sometimes get very sleepy, for with so many people in a small room the air is soon exhausted, and as there are always dyspeptic members who object to a draught, and the noise outside is considerable, we are not often able to open the windows. Still, I am slowly learning some useful facts, and in time I may know a good case from a bad one.

For the completion of our training, without which no one can be left in charge of a C.O.S. office, we have to learn to "take down a case," as it is called.

I do not feel at all able to do this at present, for it really is a very difficult piece of work.

To sit opposite a proud, sensitive man and be obliged to ask him all sorts of questions

about his family, his work, his income, and debts, makes me feel hot and cold all over. The temptation to skip the difficult questions is almost irresistible, and yet one feels that unless the circumstances are recorded fully and accurately, not only will the work be incomplete and unsatisfactory, but also, at the next committee meeting, when the subject has to be fully discussed, and the case dealt with, the incompleteness of the information supplied will be obvious to every capable member present. If you heard a well-trained secretary taking down a case you would never realise how much information he is obtaining by his carefully worded questions ; he writes all the time, and yet he only seems to listen ; he asks questions, but is not inquisitive ; he draws conclusions, but does not give offence.

Of course, with this, as with other things, practice makes perfect ; and in time, with patience and perseverance, I may be able to obtain the maximum of information with the minimum of discomfort.

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. In connection with this C.O.S. work I am going to lectures on the Poor Law. Of course I have read a certain amount about this before, but here one looks at it from a somewhat different point of view ; the workhouse is a living reality in these parts, whereas ordinarily one hears very little about it. The duties of guardians, the dangers of outdoor relief, the treatment of workhouse children, are all new subjects to me, but they all seem to be important matters.

Some people like this theoretical training far better than the practical work ; of course it is cleaner, and in many ways far easier, and yet the one without the other seems to me incomplete and unsatisfactory.

IV

MY DISTRICT

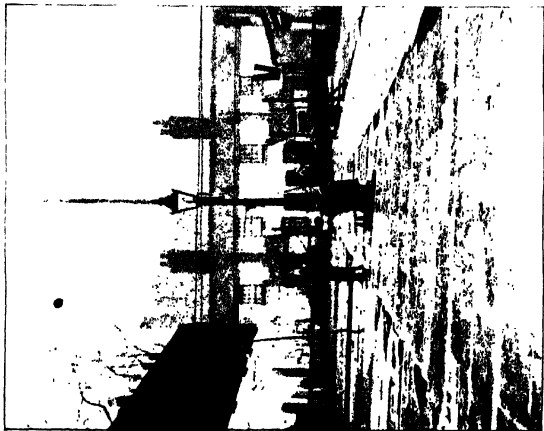
THE C.O.S. training is interesting ; the difficult part is the application of the principles in one's district visiting.

Alas ! I have no natural talent for this sort of visiting : I am always oppressed with the feeling that it is absurd to call on people when you really have no particular reason for going to see them. I can quite understand now, why tracts have sometimes been so popular ; for if one can only offer a "bit 'er readin'," as they call it, that is better than nothing ; besides, a tract suggests religion, or something like it, rather than relief, and that is an enormous advantage.

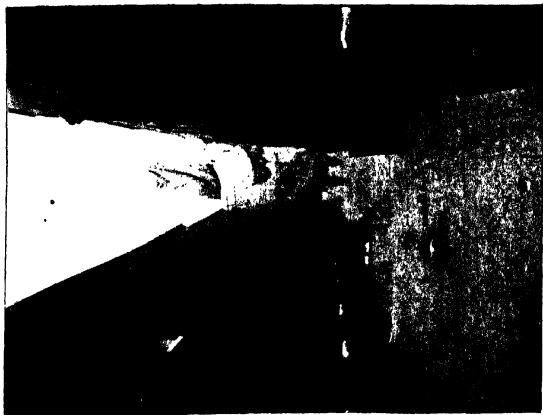
The people I have to visit are poor, but not of the poorest ; they live in a slum, but not the worst sort of slum ; and though they are dirty, it is possible to be dirtier.

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The court in which they live is a large one, and the houses are all alike, each having two rooms, one above the other; but no wash-house. The houses are old, very old, and they ought to have been pulled down some time ago; before each there is a little paved yard, which used, in more prosperous days, to be a garden: beyond that is the central part of the court, which is also paved. The houses are down two sides and along the lower end; and at the top are posts, which prevent any traffic from passing that way. This arrangement makes it a very safe place for children, and they literally swarm there. I am afraid, however, that it is its antiquity, rather than its safety, which makes it a possible place for children; for the houses are so old and inconvenient, that no one who can find a home elsewhere will venture to take them; and so the landlord is driven to accommodate those very undesirable tenants, the people with families of six or eight children.



PART OF MY DISTRICT.



THE PLACE OF THE HOUSE OF DEATH.

In such a place as that, the ideal visiting lady is, in the opinion of the inhabitants, one who takes with her a large purse, and a book of relief tickets, from which she can distribute money, or orders for meat, coal, and groceries; one who can thus respond liberally to any appeal, and be suitably touched by any tale of distress. Which, by the way, is one of the advantages of a uniform; any special dress gives a professional air at once, and professionals are not expected to give.

It is quite a revelation to me to find how much more I seem to be respected in that court when, by any chance, I have to go there in smart clothes. As a rule, we wear short walking skirts, and have everything else as washable as possible; but I am quite sure that, down there, fine clothes are as much appreciated as they are by the inmates of the workhouse. A plain, business-like appearance does not appeal to those people, for they expect a lady to be smartly dressed, and if she has no fine clothes then

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• she is a “young person” who does something to earn something. I fancy, that as the people who sell tea from house to house are known to have a commission on every order, so the plainly dressed visitor who takes the parish magazine, or who tries to get depositors for the Penny Bank, is supposed to earn her little percentage. I feel morally certain that when you have pleaded that poor little pale-faced Jimmy Smith may go into the country, his mother thinks she is doing you a great kindness by helping to add to your income, when she allows his name to be added to your list.

When I began to visit in this court I was looked upon as a possible source of money and blankets, and, in some cases, I was greeted quite effusively. In a very short time, however, these hopes faded away, and now, although I am not treated with the same sort of servile respect, still, I am on better terms with the people, for there is not the same need for deception as to the size of the

family income when nothing is forthcoming, to eke it out.

But even now I have the occasional discomfort of being thanked for gifts which seem to arrive in a mysterious sort of way. Only the other day one old lady told me how grateful she was for a flannel garment, "which come in so 'andy and useful for Matilda." Nothing I could say would convince her that the garment was not from me, and do what I would, she continued to thank me. Was it a hint, I wonder, or could the garment have been an anonymous gift?

I find that in the court certain officials are really feared. In the first place there is the School Board man, who may turn up at any moment and discover Mary Jane, aged twelve, kept at home to mind the baby; or Tommy, who has not yet begun to go to school though he is well over five (this latter catastrophe does not happen so often, Tommy's mother being only too thankful to send him

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at three and a half if she can induce any schoolmistress to take him).

One fully appreciates how tempting it is to keep Mary Jane at home, at least on washing day. Perhaps there are six little ones, one of them a small baby, and twins of eighteen months. Poor Mary Jane, what a time of it she does have, and what a plucky little bit of a person she sometimes is! I love to have a chat with her when she is left in charge, and is at her ease, for she may tell me in confidence what she would really like to do when she leaves school, and then I can sometimes help her to carry out her plans, or persuade her to reconsider the matter.

I always feel that for the last two years at school the girls should only go for half a day, and stay till they are fifteen or sixteen. After a morning at home cleaning up the house and cooking the children's dinner, cooking lessons at school with the other girls would be quite a nice change, and would,

perhaps, be more useful than they are under the present system ; it might even occur to the pupils that the cooking at home could be improved, and the ordinary herring and potato made into a really tasty dish.

What surprises me about the troubles with the school authorities is that the fine of five shillings is always forthcoming, even when father has been out of work for six weeks or more. Unfortunately, the fines are more frequent when father is out of work, for it is when mother is driven to do a "bit 'er cleanin'" that Mary Jane is so useful in looking after the baby.

Another authority to be dreaded is "Sanitary" as they call him. His visits are not at all regular, but when he does come it may mean that the whole of the kitchen floor will have to be taken up for the drains to be put in order ; or that the yard will be in a hopeless mess for a week or two for similar reasons. It seems to be his business, too, to inquire into the number of animals kept in

the yard, and to forbid anything very outrageous. As far as one can see, however, he is not strict in his requirements.

That some one should keep an eye on the live-stock is certainly necessary, for what with dogs, cats, chickens, pigeons, and rabbits the court must, at times, especially in the hot weather, be very trying to those of the inhabitants who object to animals and their ways. I am very fond of animals, but a few visits to these courts have convinced me that it is very necessary for all who come to work in a Settlement to learn something about the appearance and habits of the more objectionable and active insects.

I do not suppose you know anything whatever about the subject, but if ever you come here I advise you to find out a little about it; forewarned is, in this matter, very much forearmed, and to any one who has had plain and definite instruction there is not much risk. But it sometimes happens that people have come up to work whose education in

this subject has been entirely neglected, and they, poor dears, have sometimes had alarming experiences. The chief thing is to have washable garments whenever possible, and to keep your eyes open. Above all, to be morally certain, that in a small court, where most of the people are very dirty, and where there is a menagerie of some sort in every house, there are certain to be ever so many tiny beasts, especially in the hot weather.

"County Council," or "Sandy" as the people call him "because of 'is red 'air," is another powerful gentleman, though I never can find out exactly what his business is. One funny old lady who talks to me about him evidently looks upon him as her special friend, and she sometimes gives me examples of his "pretty wit." One day she consulted him about the holes in her floor, through which the rats were wont to come at night and finish up any little dainty that happened to be lying about. She told me that his answer to her complaint was that she "lived too 'igh."

“‘It’s too much roast pork as does it,’ says ‘e.

“‘Well, says I, it must be some as you’ve ‘ad, and they smell it when you comes ter call, for there ain’t no ‘igh livin’ ‘ere.’ Jest one of ‘is jokes, you know,” she added.

She longed for him to spend just one night in that kitchen of hers, when “the rats was a runnin’ abaht,” in order that she might see him run, with the rats in pursuit. After such an experience she thought he might be inclined to sympathise with her. •

The question of lodgers is a delicate one, and one on which “Sandy” is supposed to have opinions. These people do take lodgers, but where they get to is a mystery; a spare room is an unknown luxury, and the only sofa is generally an absolute necessity for the children to sleep on. That there is much overcrowding the people know quite well, but they jeer at the method of inspection. Sunday is said to be the only day when it is possible to see the whole household, and that is the

one day on which inspectors are sure not to come. Perhaps some Sunday "Sandy" will put in an appearance, and then there will be rejoicings in the house of the fat old tale-bearing neighbour.

"The Rent" is another visitor. When I go to call on Monday mornings I am sometimes taken for him. He is a regular gentleman, and not to be put off. I must say the way in which those poor old tenants have sixpence suddenly put on the rent for no apparent reason strikes me as very hard. It is a case of pay or go, too, though it does not follow that the command to go is taken any notice of. I am sure it is a very difficult matter to get rid of tenants who do not mean to go, and it sometimes takes weeks. The landlord has his little difficulties as well as the tenant, for he may have to take out windows and grates before he can get rid of really bad people who pay no rent; one can only hope that it is the really bad landlords who have most of the quite impossible tenants.

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In my court many of the people are, irregular in all their payments, for there are always men * out of work, drunkenness is quite common, and there is very little idea of thrift or economy. What with the rent, insurance, an additional one and sixpence for the machine and one shilling for the furniture on the hire system, with perhaps sixpence a week to a neighbour for the loan of a sovereign in hard times, the money soon goes.

If all these weekly payments for machine or furniture were added up, I think the poor would be found to pay very dearly for the few comforts they enjoy ; and yet, in good times, many of them will go for a day to Worthing, or for a "bean-feast," and spend the money without a thought of the rainy day which is certain to come sometime. Perhaps they realise that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush !

V

THE RESIDENTS

DARE I venture to give you some idea of the people who live here ? I think I may.

Firstly, I will introduce you to the elderly lady. She is well educated and really clever, and what she has to say is well worth listening to ; she gives me the impression of having seen rather too much of the seamy side of all good work, for she is full of the evil wrought by kind-hearted people, who, she says, are the curse of the poor, only making them thriftless and dependent. She is rather trying to the Head, for, after exhausting herself unduly all day, she finds all the ordinary food indigestible, and wants predigested dainties last thing at night ; she is also weary in the morning, and can take no breakfast, only a predigested lunch at eleven. Her vile body is a great drag

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on her brave spirit, poor dear. She is, unlike many delicate, nervous people, curiously sensitive to the fatigues of others, and sometimes, when one is really done up, she will quietly and gently bring tea, or place a comfortable chair near the fire, and generally take one in hand in the sweetest of ways. She is wonderfully powerful and fascinating, but a Settlement seems too busy a place for her, though she takes a keen interest in her fellow "settlers."

The mournful worker shall be the next to claim your sympathy. I think her melancholy is only skin-deep, but she looks so sad that one fancies, at first, that it must come from the heart. She is apparently very depressed about her work, but in reality is very pleased with it all, and is quite proud of her Sunday-school class. It always seems to me that she gets to the heart of the poor better than any of us, for her people love her dearly. She never complains, and is a dear unselfish soul, but she has just this bad habit of melancholy. I think she needs some one to cheer her up by

saying nice things to her ; and yet, as she is inclined to idolise her friends, too much kindness would not be good for her. * She reminds me of some dear old spaniel who is always watching, with sad eyes, for a smile from his master ; and will cover his hands with caresses at the least sign of softness. She gives no trouble in the house, and is always ready to wait on any one who will accept her services.

The next member of our household I call the silent worker. She is really a dear, and has always been so good to me, but she is just like a ghost, so white and strange is her appearance. She softly glides in and out, and is generally very silent at the meals, though when she does talk she has no end of good things to say. She has a way of disappearing for long hours at a time, and no one is given a hint as to the weighty business which she is attending to. I always hope she carries her name and address about with her, for we should never know where to look for her if she did not turn up. This ghost of ours is always cold ; she

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would really like, I think, to sit on the fire instead of by it ; in spite of that she is ardent, and feels strongly on those subjects which in her hours of expansion she ably discusses. We should miss our silent one very much, though she does spare us so little of her company.

The comfortable member of the household is a great contrast. Her peculiarity is that she looks serene and happy at all times. She knows her own capacity, and if she undertakes to do a thing it is well done. No one is better tempered, and no one gives less trouble. She works really well, and yet does not overwork. She reads much and comfortably ; and as she sits there, after a respectable day's work, in an easy chair, feet up, by the fire, she gives us all a delightful sense of repose ; it is a real rest even to look at her. She is, among other things, an encyclopædia of modern literature, and will run off the titles of the good new novels without any hesitation, and from the six library books will tell you which is the one that is most worth reading. The humorous

side of life is, for her, always kept uppermost : she pines, simply pines, for a joke, and it gives her much pleasure to hand on those she has accumulated for the amusement of her friends.

Here I must sketch for you with gentle, very gentle touches the musical resident.

She sings to us, and with her beautiful voice and enthusiastic devotion to her art she often lifts us out of that Slough of Despond into which we are rather apt to slip. I think she makes one realise what poor old Saul used to feel like when David played away his passions and fears.

To the poor, too, our songster gives of her best ; at old ladies' tea-parties, at parish gatherings, and Settlement "at homes" she willingly consents to sing.

We owe more to her than she realises, for she is gentle and not proud.

She has other gifts besides musical ones, and I fancy that those among whom she works in a disheartening and very slummy

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parish would be more than lonely without her.

For real unselfishness commend me to the next, whom I may call the long-suffering worker. She uncomplainingly and methodically finishes up all sorts of odd bits of work. This one willingly stops behind when any one else wants to go ahead. This, our mainstay of much of the work, always steps into the breach and does a little more when we are short-handed. Every now and then she is put up on a high chair, so to speak, and forcibly held there, while her work is applauded, and she is asked to fill a position of importance ; but in no time she is down again, tempting every one to tread upon her and take advantage of the kind heart. We all ask her to do odd jobs just because she agrees so readily. Late at night she may be helping in a club for this one, or on a hot afternoon she will be on duty in a stuffy office while that one is out with friends. The resident who wants an extra holiday appeals to her "just to keep things

going"; and if any one is ill in bed she it is who does so much to ease the patient and make things comfortable for her.

How often she has saved the situation at one time and another I should not like to say; and yet she is never the one to complain, or to make a fuss; every one in the house knows perfectly well, however, what a dear, unselfish, methodical thing it is.

Some day in the future I am sure she will be set upon a large throne and be made to take her proper place; and yet, somehow, she never could be happy there, but would slip quietly down again directly the judgment was finished.

One more I must tell you about, and she shall be called the "Head Gardener." She is all sorts of things besides; but what's in a name? She is splendidly keen about the garden, and in it she works like a nigger, setting other people to work in it, too, like niggers, and producing a fine effect.

She gets money to buy things for it, and

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new earth to put on the top of the old gritty stuff, so that when she brings some nice uncommon little plants to live there they may fancy they are still in the country.

She is energetic and enthusiastic, and would like to undertake everything. She wears out her nerves, soul and body, and then goes to Italy to find new ones, or patch up the old, leaving odds and ends of work to be finished up by the "unselfish one."

But the head gardener keeps us all alive, and adds a touch of colour here, a bit of comfort there, just to keep us going when the days are cold and dark, and tempers are short.

What a really enthusiastic, hard-working sort of head gardener means to a place like this no one who has not lived here can have any idea; but when she is just on the verge of an Italian tour, oh, dear me——

To describe the Head of the Settlement would be quite impossible, for she has so many sides that no one person can really

know her. Were it necessary, she could, I fancy, do all the work herself, for from trimming hats to attending to small plumbing jobs, nothing comes amiss to her. She does all the housekeeping, and writes many letters; she seems to be on most of the committees in the neighbourhood, and yet she has time to make covers to the chairs and weed the garden; she is studious, too, and fond of research work. Above all, she is a saint—but that is a secret.

Talking is not easy to her; but by complete silence at the critical moment she can often gain her point. Though outwardly calm, I fancy she is sensitive, warm-hearted, and generous to a fault. She is neat, dainty, and methodical in all her doings, and yet no one could call her petty.

If some one were wanted to take entire charge of a newly conquered territory, how well she would fill the post! She could teach the natives all things necessary for their moral and physical well-being: design their

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houses, lay out their gardens, and teach them how to sew and to cook. She would use the resources of the land for their general edification, and without any commotion or disturbance would soon make the place into a self-respecting, well-doing colony.

Our Head is indeed one to be proud of; one realises that more and more every day. While she is in charge nothing can go seriously wrong with us—of that I am convinced.

The other members of the household are nice, ordinary sort of people, with no very marked characteristics—at least so it appears to me at present. Later on I dare say the eccentricities will show themselves. I hope they will, for people with little ways of their own are always interesting.

VI

SOME FRIENDS

I AM not surprised that you pity me in my capacity of district visitor ; I pity myself, I can assure you ; and yet, although I never want to visit, I always find something or some one extremely interesting nearly every time I go.

Perhaps you would like to hear about some of the people in the district. They are very closely packed, and each family has only a very small portion of the court to call their own.

Some of the inhabitants have lived in that place for twenty years or more ; others only for a month or so. I find that the old ones hate turning out ; they seem in some way to live in the past, and they take a pride in upholding the old traditions to some slight extent ; these are more friendly together than

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the others, and they struggle to save an old creeper here, a small flower-bed there, and so on.

When once these old people root themselves up it is difficult to find any one to whom the place in its present condition offers any attraction; and so the families come and go in the old houses, and each new-comer is a little lower in the social scale than the last. There they are, however, good and bad all mixed up together, with, at first sight, very little to distinguish the sinners from the saints.

But on close inspection the differences become more apparent.

The top of the court is looked upon as the most aristocratic part, as is usually the case, I believe, in a cul-de-sac; down in the darkness at the far end the wicked flourish.

At No. 2 live my favourite old couple. They are old inhabitants, and they remember the court in its prosperous days, when the gardens had not yet been paved and made



MY FAVOURITE OLD COUPLE.

into yards, but were bright with flowers. They are both well over seventy, and they earn their living in that little place without any assistance from the rates, and, as far as I know, without asking for private charity.

The downstairs room—the kitchen-parlour—is half filled by the mangle, which is one of the large, old-fashioned capable sort, with great pieces of rock inside; the kind to really make a satisfactory impression on the clothes. The old lady puts the things on the rollers, and the husband turns the handle; and as they sometimes explain to me, on a cold day in winter there is no need for a fire, as the work is quite enough to keep you warm.

What a respectable job it is, to be sure!—and how nice the clothes look when they are done! I would send my things to be mangled there with the greatest confidence.

It is his business to take the things home, while she stays to tidy up the house.

It always amuses me that “the missus” takes a singular pride in her very few thin

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locks of straight grey hair ; I often find her in her leisure moments fondly tidying them with a little metal comb, and arranging them lovingly on the top of her somewhat bald old head.

As to the house, it is always spotless ; and the bird-cage, which in warm weather hangs outside the front door, is as daintily kept as any lady could wish. The cage has a little garden with a small fence and five-barred gate ; and it, with its little occupant, are a real joy to the old couple.

A little farther down the court lived, till quite lately, a woman for whose all-round capacity I have the greatest respect. She was a widow when I first knew her, still broken-hearted at the loss of her young husband. She has managed by hard work to keep her three girls, from whom no one could part her. Some friends had tried, she told me, to persuade her, after her husband's death, to let at least one of her children go to an orphanage—but no ; she was determined

to keep them and bring them up with her true mother's love.

Her work was to make up dozens of garments for a large contracting firm. She had a good strong sewing-machine, and the pace at which she finished those garments, many of them of hard unbleached calico, was a marvel to me. The work was so well done, too, so neatly, and with such a pretty stitch. Sometimes she would sit up all night to finish an order which had to be ready at nine o'clock in the morning; for on punctual delivery of the work depended its regularity, and that was a vital matter to her.

She was a delicate woman, but always cheerful and contented even when she was very tired and almost at the end of her strength; the children, too, were jolly and well fed.

Poor thing! it was a hard life for her at that time, and yet there was an air of refinement about her that was very striking. She would sometimes hold long arguments

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with me as she worked, or in the intervals when one lot of work was done and the next had not come in, and the subject on which she was most interested was "religious belief." She was a strong supporter of some chapel, where, she told me, she was glad to "give her testimony." She knew her Bible well, and could give very good reasons for the faith that was in her. She had no feeling against the Church, and her youngest little girl, who is my godchild, is to be brought up as a Church-woman, if she wishes it, in consideration of my feelings.

Just lately she has married again, her husband being foreman of the place for which she works. It took her some time to decide whether it was disloyal to her first love, but she told me she had explained that her heart had been given once for all in those happy young days. Still the faithful elderly lover wanted her, and so they were married.

Now she is happily settled in her new

home ; she is not so worried as she used to be, for her husband is comfortably off, and there is as much work for her as she can manage. She is so thankful to be able to give the children more comforts, and to have more time to look after them.

At the bottom of the court live, as I said before, the blackest sinners ; and they are a curious set. You would be interested to talk to them, I am sure. Two of the women are great characters, and are cheerful and witty in spite of their squalid surroundings.

One of them is Irish, and I am told by the neighbours, near and far, that her language is "somethink hawful," or, as one emphatically expresses it, "she 'as a filthy mouth." She looks it, I must say. Her chief joy in life is to go "'oppin'"—that is her yearly holiday ; the whole family goes—such a sturdy, bonny-looking family—and she gives me glowing accounts of the delight and comfort of the hop-fields, the sleeping accommodation, and even the mission service with its magic-

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lantern; if only the weather is reasonably fine she is supremely happy all the time.

She is very friendly with the extremely fat lady next door—unless they have had words, which sometimes happens with awful emphasis. This portly widow earns a living by washing towels for the “lidies and gentlemen who perform in the pantomime.” I see them there constantly, dozens and dozens of them, all over grease-paint, and a treat to wash, as she informs me.

However, it is regular work, and by judicious management of neighbours and their fires, she has many helpers, and manages to make a good living. One neighbour tells me, in confidence, that she adds to her gains by lending small sums to people in the court at a high rate of interest.

It takes at least two policemen to convey her on a trolley to the police station, on those unhappy occasions when she has imbibed too freely, and then taken to quarrelling; she can bite and scratch, too, with the best, so

she is not one to be undertaken lightly. It is a great worry to her that she is so fat, and annoying that, as her doctor says, everything she takes goes to make blood, for she is very rubicund.

This doctor also warns her, with great solemnity, that every drop of drink is so much poison ; and this makes her quite temperate when she has an attack of illness. On wet days, when she is well, her cottage sometimes smells suspiciously spirituous, and she has, at times, explained to me that, after being in the wash-tub all day, she finds that a drop of something hot is the only thing to keep out the cold. As the drops of something hot are ordered for two, it explains why her washing jobs are so popular among the black sheep at the end : she is never in need of a helper. Her fat, lazy son comes to the club, but I am afraid he will never be a great credit to us, for he is dreadfully spoilt at home.

Next door to her, on the other side, lives

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a woman who works at a sweated industry ; when she is busy her cottage is half full of cardboard boxes. What surprises me is that with such a dirty little hole of a house, and with everything about so grubby, she is able to keep piles of fancy boxes so spotlessly clean. It is a model of neatness, this work of hers, and very rapidly accomplished. She is, otherwise, a helpless sort of body with a very large family. One of her grimy babes is a perfect darling ; she has soft and silky fair curls, and the bluest of blue eyes, with that pretty, shy way that is so attractive ; I always wish she could stay at three years old for a few years to brighten the court with those sunny blue eyes ; for the blue is apt to fade when the sunshine within has to fight so hard with the surrounding gloom.

There is one woman for whom I have a real feeling of loathing. She is one to whom the "churchyard has indeed been a good friend," as they gruesomely put it, for she has buried thirteen children. It seems to me

so awful that I have tried to make her "dream dreams and see visions" of those thirteen little souls ; but I am almost afraid she is too callous to be alarmed at anything.

A few doors from this house of death lived, until a few weeks ago, a little family that was almost a model. In that house I saw, to my ever-increasing wonder, what can be done with twenty-five shillings a week if only, and it is indeed if only, father and mother are both respectable people, and are careful and well doing. The man was a lamplighter ; a good, steady fellow, about forty, and his wife was about the same age.

The beds in that model home were clean and comfortable ; the meals, whenever I happened to see them, were quite nice and decently served, and the children—four bonny, fat little things with red hair like father, and two older dark ones like mother—were clean, had comfortable clothes, and went to school regularly in good time.

The wife was a jolly sort of woman ; she

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very seldom seemed worried or hurried, and, if necessary, she could find time to take delicate Tom—my special friend—to hospital, though she knew she could not accomplish the journey in less than half-a-day. She took him to “Bart.’s,” for she preferred it to the “shilling doctor”; she told me that when Tom had pleurisy so badly he was there for weeks, and when he went back every one was good to him, and the sister always knew him again, and so he was quite willing to go at any time.

They were, indeed, interesting people. The husband was one of those rare products of the slums as one finds them here, a confessedly religious man, who kept his convictions to himself, and acted up to them. He went regularly to church, but he went as a matter of course, and without either shame or boasting; he taught his boys to go with him, and to understand why they went. He told me once that he had been converted, and that it had made a difference to him.

He was reserved, however, and said very little about it. He was a quiet, considerate sort of man, and such a kind father. He loved his pipe, but "with so many little 'uns to provide for," he treated it as a luxury, and only had a taste of tobacco now and then.

I remember quite well the pride with which father and mother started out together one Saturday night to get the new things with which to complete the "short coating" of the baby.

They have gone to Peckham now, where they have a larger house at the same rent. I miss them from the dark court, which is, I am sure, much poorer without them. It was quite a wise move, and they will all be better with more light and air. I shall never forget that practical demonstration of what can be done with little money and much love and consideration.

But you will be tired of this scribble, and I must stop. I could tell you many things about these people, for I am so often in the

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court that they do not take any special notice of me, and I see them as they really are. Some are very reserved, and only now and then do they "pass a remark," as they call it; others are always ready for a chat, and I like to stop and talk to them. Only when they begin to whisper sweet nothings in my ear about "hard times" and "out of work" am I obliged to go hurriedly on my way. And so I must now.

VII

THE BOYS' CLUB—IN THE SCHOOLROOM

I AM so sorry not to have written before, but I have been very busy ; now I can only write about the one subject of which my mind has been full for the last month or two, and that is the Boys' Club.

I say "the" Boys' Club, because it is the one for which I am primarily responsible, and in which I therefore take a very keen interest. It is a parochial club, because the Settlement has none of its own, and we only help in those belonging to the parishes in which we work.

You may think it is very bold of me to undertake this work ; but of course I have help, both from the Settlement and from the church, though, so far, the help from the church has not been much good.

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A lady has had a very successful club for boys quite near here, and I have been to help her several times. She has given me some very useful hints, and has shown me how they manage all sorts of things in connection with their club.

The vicar of the parish is very pleased to have it; but I fancy he is nervous of leaving us alone with the boys, in case we let them get out of hand. Fortunately, I have two very good helpers from the Settlement, and we try to convince him that we are not afraid, and are quite equal to the task. As I have found the money for all the games and apparatus, he is beginning to think we mean business, and that is something accomplished.

At present the club is only open twice a week, and we have about a dozen regular members and many irregular ones. It certainly seems necessary that some such place should be provided in a parish, for the boys will go somewhere in the evening, and we give them

more wholesome forms of amusement than they get in the low music-halls. I have never had the courage to go to one of these, and really see, for myself, what goes on ; no doubt most of them are fairly respectable, though not what you might call refined. Even the cheapest are, however, too expensive for more than an occasional visit, unless a boy is unusually well off.

I asked one of the boys the other day what sort of things he saw when he went to places of amusement. He hesitated before giving an answer, and when he gave it I could not really understand, but I gathered that he liked to see the ladies in the ballet. This was rather depressing, as I hoped that he preferred the acrobats, or the performing animals, or even the clown.

We sometimes hear descriptions of anything exceptional, such as the man who swallowed swords and the champion boxer ; and last week I think we were looked upon as much wanting in the sporting instinct, because we

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had not been to see the "wrestling ladies," who were drawing large audiences at the most popular of the halls; the athletic woman is not looked upon with as much suspicion as I should have expected!

We do not have exciting amusements like these in our club, but there are plenty of games, such as draughts and dominoes; there are boxing-gloves, a punching-ball, books, picture papers, and a harmless pistol.

A harmless pistol is one with an india-rubber-topped shooter; it is a very safe instrument, though I believe the india-rubber can be very sharp if it catches you on the nose or the eye, which are, of course, the likeliest spots for any boy to aim at. We are a little worried in our minds about this pistol, because it is used in every way except the right one. There is a nice solid wooden target provided, and this is the thing to shoot at, so that with four or five really steady players we can have a very good game, each one making a score in turn, and the winner getting a prize of

chocolates or sweets. This is all very nice ; but the more intelligent spirits find other and more exciting uses for the pistol which may interest you.

But I must tell you first that the place we are allowed to use for this club is the infants' room in the Church schools. It is a warm, comfortable little place, with walls distempered a cheerful pink, on which are hung pictures of animals, trees, and other pleasing and innocent subjects.

Unfortunately, a really interesting and absorbing game among the boys is to fire the harmless pistol at the equally harmless nose of the pictorial lion on the wall ; he always seems to smile amiably at the effort, but alas ! as his constitution is thin, the india-rubber of the pistol sometimes penetrates into his internal organs, and so he is not so fresh-looking a picture as he used to be.

Then, again, you can quite understand how fascinating it is to fire that sucker at the wall, just in order to pull it off in the lovely way

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an india-rubber sucker *will* come off if you pull hard. Unfortunately, a small portion of the pink distemper sometimes comes off too, and the pink walls are beginning to look rather soiled.

We do not want to confiscate the pistol, but I am sure we shall have to harden our hearts if they will use every object but the right one to fire at.

Then there are other drawbacks to the room. It is quite suitable and nice for infants ; but there are many small immovable desks which take up a great deal of room. Unfortunately they have a horrible fascination for these young men, aged about fourteen to eighteen, as they use them as a sort of staircase. As each desk is raised a small step above the one below, it really makes an excellent staircase, when you have grasped the idea ; but the real charm of the thing to the boys is not so much the actual staircase as the lovely rattle that can be made by a somewhat dancing descent of it. Fortunately the desks are strong, and at pre-

sent they do not show signs of wear ; we must, however, put a stop to this staircase dance, or the end of it will be that the school inspector will have something unpleasant to say.

The entrance fee to the club is a halfpenny a night, to be paid in advance. About the paying in advance we were kindly warned by an experienced club manager, who advised us on no account to admit any boy without his halfpenny ; we have stuck rigidly to this rule, and so, I am glad to say, there are no debts.

The refreshment department is quite a feature. We make large cups of cocoa for a halfpenny a cup, and provide other dainties in the shape of currant and seed cake, pastry, rock cakes, and biscuits. We have to boil the kettle on a spirit-lamp, which is rather a slow, troublesome business ; but we use a mixture of cocoa and milk in order to avoid the difficulty of getting fresh milk every night. This mixed stuff is really very good, and the boys like it very much.

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. Of course, as time goes on, we very much hope to develop the work ; but it is best to begin in a small way, and find out little by little what is most appreciated.

The members of the club are very interesting, and it is quite impossible to tell by outside appearance what they are like within. They come in all sorts of clothes, some in ordinary working things, some in black coats, a few in rags ; the only thing we ask in this way being that they shall wash before they come. Any boy who arrives with dirty hands may be sent home to wash, or if he is not very black he is occasionally allowed to use club soap under the tap. We try to make them keep this rule, because the feel of games which have been constantly fingered by dirty hands is trying to all of us.

The black-coated members are not by any means always the most trustworthy, and on the whole I prefer a good, honest, straightforward, working boy. We have had a great deal of trouble with a most respectable little



AN OLD CLUB BOY AND HIS MOTHER.

group of boys aged seventeen to nineteen ; they always seemed to be quite happy and contented with simple little games like draughts and dominoes, so I always felt a little suspicious of them. *Now* we know that it is not the games that cause that feeling of quiet excitement, but the money on the games ; in other words, they were a regular gambling set, who came to the club to spend a quiet undisturbed evening ! We were given one or two hints about these boys from outside, and when once we were on the watch, it was quite easy to hear the chink of the money at the end of a game, or to catch the more cautious players settling up outside. It was difficult to know what to do, but we have turned the ringleaders out of the club, and have tried to make the younger boys understand that all betting is not only dangerous and undesirable in itself, but is strictly against the rules of the club.

One young monkey rather amuses me, but he is a tiresome boy ; he never seems to rest

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for one minute, but is always doing something to annoy every one else. He is an adept at finding new and horrible uses for games and tools, and he can do more damage in one evening than the other boys do in a week. He is a pale, weedy-looking fellow; but his friends tell me he is the champion swimmer of the London Board Schools, and by no means to be despised. The coolness of the water has entered into his blood, and nothing disturbs him; his ingenuity is fascinating or maddening according to the mood in which it meets you. He is a funny, modest sort of boy, and I like him very much, but we sometimes have had to ask two of the strongest members to put him out. When he gets outside he amuses himself by throwing things at the windows, but fortunately without breaking any glass. He always comes back quite cheerfully after these stormy scenes without a trace of ill-feeling.

It always surprises me to find how nice and considerate, on the whole, the boys are

to deal with. The other day I had to turn a small boy out for throwing things about ; he did not expect to go so soon, and was furious because he could not have his halfpenny back ; I think he really would have tried to kill me, if he could have put his hand on a suitable instrument ; but the next day he hailed me cheerfully with "'Ullo, miss," from behind the railway waggon in which he was doing his daily job ; and at night he came back to the club, as smiling and polite as ever.

I am hoping that we shall be able to start a Bible class for a few of the steadier boys ; but it will not be easy, for they do so object to any suggestion of church or religion. It is a real question whether we should start with a Bible class, and then develop the club ; or start with the club, and work up to the Bible class. I can't help feeling that the religious part must be voluntary to be any good, and to make attendance at a Bible class compulsory for all members of the club

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does not quite satisfy me ; at any rate for the present we shall go on as we are, and when we start the class we may have about half-a-dozen, each of whom will come if the others come too.

I feel sure that it is only a matter of time, and when once they understand the object of a class they will come, and will do their best to follow our lead, as most of them do already in the ordinary etiquette of the club. If only a group of the older members approve of anything, the younger ones will soon catch the infection.

I must end now, but I will let you know how the club goes on. Perhaps some day you will come and see it ; I should love to know what you would do with the boys, for I remember that you are clever with them.

VIII

COUNTRY HOLIDAYS

THIS is my day off, and as I am too tired to go to a concert or do shopping, I am staying at home, in a lazy sort of way, to rest.

I have been rather overworked lately, for this is just the time when the bulk of the work has to be done for the C.C.H.F.

As perhaps you know, this stands for the Children's Country Holiday Fund, which is the largest fund in London for sending children into the country. It is, of course, a very important work, for this change of two weeks to the country or the seaside does wonders for ordinary healthy children, and even for the poor white delicate little things it does something to prevent more serious mischief. I have often been told by the mothers that this holiday saves doctor's bills

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during the next winter; and I can quite believe it.

There is a committee in every district of London for carrying out the work, consisting of business men, ladies, clergy, school-masters, and any one who will be responsible for visiting and collecting for a certain school. There is really quite a cheerful feeling about the whole thing, and it is one of the most happily managed charities that I know of. No one but an out and out pessimist could say that the fund is unnecessary, or that it is badly administered.

One of the most important rules laid down by the Central Council is that, in all but exceptional cases, the parents of each child must contribute towards the cost of the holiday. What is to be the amount of the contribution depends upon the decision of the local committee, and this is based upon the general circumstances of the family.

In a well-managed district the collection of this money begins in the September or

October before the next holiday in August ; and the easiest way to manage it is to apply to the school- master or mistress for permission to use some little room in the school building, at some convenient time, just before, or after, school hours, once a week. The children who are anxious to go for the holiday can there bring a few pence each week to be put into the bank, and then when holiday-time comes this can be withdrawn and paid to the treasurer.

This is a very simple plan, and most of the respectable mothers find it a great convenience. I shall manage the school I have to look after in that way next season ; this year I had the work given me rather late in the spring, and so I have had a very busy time.

Of course there are always a certain number of people who, for various reasons, have not been able to save in the winter, and these must always be looked after later on ; but if the majority are doing their saving week by

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week, there is more time for working up the careless ones. Fortunately, the children love the holiday, and so they try hard to coax the weekly threepence or sixpence out of father.

In addition to the collection of money, it is generally necessary that the children's homes shall be visited two or three times. The reason for this is that as the payments depend upon the circumstances of the family, we have to do our best to find out what the circumstances are in each case. We are given a form in which we enter the name, address, and age of each child, and on this we have to record the size of the family, the father's occupation and wages, the mother's earnings, if she goes to work; the rent and club fees paid; the earnings of any child who may be at work; whether there has been any illness in the family, and so on. In short, it is this form which, when filled in, is supposed to guide the committee in determining the amount to be paid.

I have been working at this for the last few weeks. You need patience, for it is generally mother who gives the required information, and she has sometimes much to say about herself and family, and, if she gets a chance, about her neighbours and friends.

I do not grudge the time spent in this way at all, because the information that drops out casually, in a friendly talk, is much more reliable than that which is given in reply to definite questions which are asked in the same way year by year.

I am getting quite good at finding out things by indirect methods. Of course, the people are inclined to understate the family income—that is only natural; but in the course of conversation they give themselves away in different directions. For instance, Mrs. Brown, who is a nice sort of body, having given me the required information, and having declared that she could only afford five shillings for the fortnight, then went on to tell me what a good time her

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Nelly had last year, and how much she would like to go to the same place again. "Oh," she added, "it was a lovely place. Father took Tommy down on the Saturday to see Nelly, and, as there were other lodgings in the village, they stayed till Monday, and had a very nice little change."

Of course this was very pleasant, and good for father and Tommy; but the trip must have cost much more than five shillings, and if Mr. Brown can do these little things on his own account, he ought to be able to pay more than five shillings for his daughter to stay for a fortnight, including her fare there and back.

But, in addition to these signs of wealth, we also take note of periods of out of work, cases of illness or death, any of which exhaust the family savings.

Widows' children are generally taken for very little, and those who have weak and ailing children are specially urged to save up their pennies for the very necessary holiday.

For the assistance of young and inexperienced workers a list is periodically drawn up, giving the approximate wages that a man or boy can earn in the various trades ; this is a great help, for we find that if we suggest to a wife that her husband's wages are rather higher than they really are, she very quickly corrects us, and we *may* learn the truth ; but if we ask directly what the wages are she nearly always puts them too low. As to the boys' earnings, all that I can generally get at is that " 'e don't earn enough to keep 'im, miss," which sounds melancholy, but is not really so, for if a boy contributes his five or six shillings towards the family income, it is a great help, and it is the people with two or three sons or daughters at work who are so comfortably off ; the young people with four or five little children are the ones I pity, and try to deal gently with.

My children are mostly very respectable, for it is a very good Church school, and the master and mistress are particular. The

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parents can often very well afford seven and sixpence or ten shillings ; but they have an idea that five shillings is the proper amount to pay, and I have great difficulty in making some of them offer any more.

Of course the five or six shillings paid to us does not really cover the cost of the holiday to the parents ; for, as they sometimes tell me, "the children must 'ave their bits 'er things, and I likes ter send 'em away respectable."

I am sure this little effort to tidy up the children and give them decent clothes is a very good thing for some of the mothers, and it is good for the children to help in such interesting preparations. You would be amused to see the washing of frocks, the making of pinafores and trimming of hats that goes on in that last week before the children start.

I am trying very hard to work up some of the poorer parents to save a little, and let one of the children go ; and I do so wish

I could pay for one or two of my special friends ; but it is hopeless to begin that sort of thing, because it is generally the thriftless ne'er-do-weels who are in chronic need of help, and it is not quite fair to pay their expenses when some poor respectable ones are secretly pinching and screwing without any one to take pity and help.

We sometimes have to go into curious places in visiting these children, but the one I dislike most is the public-house. The other day I had to visit one of them—quite a fine large one—there I found that the father was quite willing to pay all the expenses for his little girl if she might go with the others ; his wife was dead, and he had no relatives who would take the child for her holiday. He was quite a nice man, and I told him I thought the committee could do as he wished. For this he was most grateful, and at the end of the interview he invited me to take a glass of port wine ; as it was about eleven o'clock in the morning this seemed a

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little unusual, and I was obliged to decline his hospitality !

I am constantly greeted in the street now by children who have special favours to ask. "Please, mum, can me and Polly Jones go on the 'oliday together? we're friends," says a small person, aged seven.

Or a group of boys, aged twelve to fourteen, will look shyly at me, and, with a little encouragement, run up and ask if they can all go to Mother Baker's again—"where we went last year; she was a good 'un, she was."

It am very glad to know what they want, and which of them like to go together; for unless they tell me I can never find out. I carry a note-book about with me so that I can write down the various requests accurately and promptly.

Many of the older boys go with the Church Lads' Brigade; but that is an expensive holiday, and only possible for those who are fairly well off. They have a



TOO POOR FOR A HOLIDAY.



splendid time, for they generally camp out by the sea.

I wish all the big boys could have that holiday, for the discipline, the drilling, and the general training in camp work are all so interesting, and at the same time so good for them. On the whole, too, it seems much the best thing for them to have their time regularly and fully occupied. With the C.C.H.F. boys the question of occupation is rather a difficult one, for there is no doubt that work of the wrong kind is generally provided for idle hands to do, and yet it is very difficult to make elaborate arrangements to give them suitable employment. All sorts of plans are being tried for getting over this difficulty; prizes are offered in some places for the best collection of butterflies, grasses, leaves, or flowers; or for the best essay on some country pursuit; or for a description of the village and its inhabitants.

The most hopeful solution of the difficulty seems to me to be that two or three people

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in each village shall undertake to organise, or personally conduct expeditions to the various places of interest in the locality. This is already done to some extent, but we want more people to take an interest, and offer their services.

I am really getting on well with my form, and I hope to get the cases passed early in the season.

IX

A PARTY AT THE VICARAGE

As I have only time for just a line I will tell you about a party I went to in the parish where I work.

It was not the usual school or parish-room sort of party, where sixpence is the strictly modest price of a ticket, and consequently the tea comes out of an urn, the teacups are thick and clumsy, and the cake and bread and butter are somewhat uninteresting; the sort of party where the concert which follows the tea is apt to be saddened by the vicar's statement of debts and dilapidations. Oh no, our party was a very different sort of thing to that, and it was furnished with guests by invitation, and not by tickets.

We went to the vicarage in our Sunday frocks, and on our arrival we left our hats

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and cloaks in a pretty bedroom ; there we were able to put our curls in order, and so look our best when we proceeded downstairs.

We were received by our host and hostess in the drawing-room, and there we sat on the best chairs—nice, comfortable ones with high backs. Of course none of us took the easy-chairs, because it seemed hardly polite to make oneself so much at home ; not until the fat parish doctor had comfortably seated himself in the largest of them did the elderly guests follow his example, and begin to sit at ease.

Of course it was a select party, for the vicarage will not hold every one in the parish, and besides, there are some more worthy of honour than others.

The churchwardens were there with very stiff collars and bright ties, their hair smoothly brushed, with a touch of brilliantine ; then there were the day-school teachers, Sunday-school teachers, district visitors, G.F.S.

members, senior members of the choir and the organist, the Scripture readers and Bible-woman, the grey ladies and the blue ladies, the sidesmen and the curates. You can understand fairly well what they were like, I expect.

At first we were rather shy and quiet, but the vicar and his wife were so genial and kindly that very soon every one felt quite at home.

We drank our tea out of pretty little cups ; and were tempted with thin and rolled bread and butter, hot cakes and scones, sandwiches of various sorts, pretty sugar-cakes and biscuits, rich cakes, pound and seed cakes, and indeed every dainty one can think of.

We did not eat a very large tea, because the things were so delicious that a little went quite a long way ; besides, there were no tables, and although we liked the genteel way of sitting round the drawing-room, still, we were not all accustomed to the use of our saucer as plate, and it was easier to manage small cakes than large ones.

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After tea we listened to a little music ; the doctor's daughter, who has a very sweet little voice, and who gives lessons in vocal music, sang first ; then the organist played with much spirit on the piano. After that there was a little break for conversation, and a few of the braver spirits changed seats, and chatted with another friend. Then a little more music, a solo on the violin, and a comic selection which the organist, after much persuasion, shyly consented to contribute ; then another song, and so on.

After this you will never guess what happened ; it was indeed a surprise to all of us, and quite unheard of at parish parties.

We were feeling rather warm with the tea and music, when behold ! on little glass plates, were handed round strawberry and vanilla ices, with wafers to match. The elderly guests were a little frightened to venture, and the organist vowed that he would have a bad attack of toothache ; but

most of us were much refreshed, and found this dainty very much to our liking.

When these plates had been removed we listened to a little more music, with intervals for, what then became, quite animated conversation. As there was not room for every one to sit down, the guests who preferred to talk quietly were able to do so in the library, and in the passage, which was just opposite ; several gentlemen of the party were enjoying a smoke downstairs, and I rather think a few of them were playing a quiet rubber.

Shortly after ten the two elderly spinsters, who live a few doors down the road, decided, with much regret, that it was time for them to go home ; this was the signal, and immediately afterwards, the rest of the party followed their example.

There was a great search for hats, cloaks, and umbrellas ; but at last the guests departed, each and all remarking with emphasis that they had not enjoyed an evening so much for years.

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A few of us stayed a little longer to help to finish up some of the ices and cakes ; for there were many left.

Now, I am sure you will agree with me that it was a very original and charming sort of party, and that it must have given very much pleasure to the guests.

Of course, it would be difficult to have such goings on in a clergy house, so you see a comfortable vicarage has its points after all.

X

GIRLS

It is good of you to write so often. I love your letters, and if I do not send as many as you do, it is only because this is a very busy time. I send a long letter to mother every week, but I do not write many others.

No, I am not at all afraid of infection; influenza certainly is rather prevalent, but it really is quite extraordinary how few cases of illness we have in the house; even colds and headaches are not very common, and the more serious complaints do not seem to care for us. People say it is because we are out of doors so much, and that the life is really a healthy one; I quite think that it is, only people will do too much, and so get over-tired; any one who is really sensible can keep perfectly well and fit.

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I am rather surprised that you do not approve of evening work, for it is the people who are on the spot who are most able to help with that. Two of us generally go together, but even when I am alone I am not in the least bit afraid. At first it was a little strange, but there are always so many people about in the streets that if you did want help you would only have to call for it.

It is not like the lonely country lanes where you have to walk half a mile or so before you meet another soul or see a house; that may be alarming to some people, but London streets are quite safe.

I do not care for district visiting at night, for the courts are dark, and often very dirty.

One day last week I had a nasty little experience there. I had to call at a dark little house, and as I put my hand up to the knocker I touched something cold, clammy, and infinitely horrible. I found, on peering into the darkness, that it was the cat's meat

which had been left in the knocker. Horrid ! wasn't it ?

The cats' meat man is very popular, and as he moves along with his faithful following of cats, he always reminds me of the Pied Piper of Hamelin. They say that the "meat" business is a close and profitable one, and that it is a hard one for a stranger to enter.

I can quite understand that it is profitable, for the very poorest are able to afford this little dainty fairly often. Of course the cats are worth their keep in these parts where rats are many, and are very fierce and large.

What always interest me at night are the fried fish shops ; there are several large ones near here, and I am learning to detect, from the flavour of the penetrating odour that surrounds them, where the best cooking is to be found. There is a sort of fascination about the smell when you get used to it.

One little shop that I often pass does a splendid trade, for it is often full of customers as late as 10 or 10.30 at night. At first I

could not make out what they did with a bottle which is shaken violently over each piece of fish, after it has been purchased. I have found out now that it is the vinegar bottle, and that in order to prevent waste, and to check a too liberal hand, the cork is pushed in tight, and only a little hole made in the middle of it. The result is that the vinegar can only come out a drop at a time. The fish, when purchased, is put into a piece of newspaper ! and it is then peppered and vinegared, to taste, by the owner.

In the day-time, you can tell by looking in that window what fish is most plentiful. Sometimes it is whiting, sometimes plaice or flounders, and occasionally mackerel. There they lie in heaps until they are slowly cut up and eaten.

One of the girls' clubs near here began its career next door to one of these shops. How the managers could do it passes my comprehension ; but I suppose, like the rest of us, they were optimistic, and fancied they would

get used to the smell and the company. Of course the fumes were too much for them, and they soon began to hunt for other rooms.

I am quite well, and not in need of another holiday yet, though I should love to go tripping with you. Yes, the work is hard, and it has an uncomfortable and yet satisfactory way of increasing. You take up some little thing to do, and lo and behold with a little work, it develops and requires more and more work, and becomes more and more interesting. Every one likes to succeed, but there is this drawback to success that it means so much more work.

You need not fear that we shall starve, for the food is quite good, and there is generally plenty of it. I say "generally," because it has happened occasionally, that, when a resident with a passion for economy has been left in charge of the housekeeping, we have gone a little short; but this is only natural with amateurs.

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As a little instance of this I may tell you, in confidence, that not so long ago I found myself sitting opposite four herrings which were provided for five people. Now, four was an unfortunate number, as it suggested one each and nothing for the remaining person. If there had been three it would have suggested half each and plenty over, which is, on the face of it, more reasonable; only the initiated know how little food there is on half a herring, for it really looks quite substantial; it is the awful wrestle with the bones that gives such an unsatisfied feeling.

Another day I saw the carver somewhat regretfully hand the last cutlet to a guest who arrived, a little late, but just at the critical moment, and go without herself.

To us, it is not a vital matter if we do occasionally get bread and cheese, but to guests, such a thing must not happen, for we are nothing if not hospitable, and we like our visitors to have a healthy appetite.

But I must not tell you about our little mistakes, or you will be fancying that we are half-starved, and that is not really the case at all.

In order that you may understand how well we are really looked after, I may tell you that in addition to breakfast, lunch, dinner, and tea we have hot cocoa and biscuits last thing at night.

Dinner is an early and rather rapid meal, for some of us want to go to clubs, and these begin at eight and sometimes sooner.

After two or three hours of really hard work, and a cold walk home, we get hungry again, and that is why cocoa and the kettle are always put in the dining-room at about chapel time, and left there ; so that however late you are you can be warmed and fed before turning in.

All this sounds rather greedy, so I must tell you about some work or you will call it a very dull letter.

I have been busy lately trying to teach some G.F.S. girls to play a toy symphony. Some time ago they had a very successful singing class. It was managed by the senior curate, who was very musical and could keep the girls in order. It was a splendid class, the members came regularly, the singing was good, and in every way it was a great success.

Unfortunately, however, the curate was promoted, and so had to leave. There was much weeping and wailing, of course, and the singing class had to be given up.

Lately, some new members have joined the G.F.S., and so the lady in charge is anxious to try music again; that is why I am conducting the toy symphony.

I think it is a good thing to have a change, for an ordinary singing class would only bring back sweet but sad memories of the past.

The symphony is practised with great vigour and enthusiasm; and perhaps in

time, with much patience and constant practice, we may produce a musical effect ; at present our efforts are somewhat crude and amateurish.

The trumpets sound really awful, for one is flat and the other slightly sharp—they will have to be changed. Fortunately we have a good pianist, and a fair violin, and these two are a great support to us.

I generally play some instrument as well as conducting, for you do not notice the noise so much when you are adding your own little contribution to it.

We always have an interested crowd round the door on practice nights, for of course all the little boys and girls in the street long to play the cuckoo and the drum.

When we are perfect, we are to give a performance for the benefit of the parish in general ; I feel sure it will be a great success, but we shall not be ready for that for a long time.

At present we are chiefly occupied in count-

ing five, ten, or fifteen bars, as the case may be, and then playing two or three notes on our instrument at the right time. It is a difficult business, I can tell you, and it needs the concentration of a Napoleon. What adds to the difficulty is that when you are counting perhaps ten bars from one place, the next-door instrument is counting fifteen from another; and as she counts in a loud whisper it is really distracting. The poor quail is as melancholy as she sounds, because she plays so seldom; I try to console her by telling her that she is very sweet and quite individual when she does perform, and I think that encourages her to persevere.

I quite enjoy these practices, for we always have a lively and inspiring evening, though we do live in an atmosphere of discords.

One G.F.S. member is such a joy. Her house is really the most spotless little place you can imagine. Her old father is caretaker to some large works, and he, his dear old wife, and this one daughter live happily together.

The daughter has learnt part singing, and so she knows a little music ; this makes her very useful for the toy symphony. She also works for the penny bank ; and among all the collectors she is the only one whose accounts are always to be trusted ; her books are the perfection of neatness, and there are no mistakes.

I should like you to see her ; she is a quiet, unassuming little thing, just the sort of person I should like for my own private attendant, secretary, and housekeeper.

The other G.F.S. members are quite interesting. They belong to a different class to the club girls ; some of them are rather superior and give themselves airs, but they are very capable all the same, and will take trouble over anything when once they are interested in it. Most of them are quiet and respectable, very easy to manage and quite willing to sing, to sew, or even to read good books. Some people might call them a little dull, but to me they are very attractive

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after a few evenings with those lively little hooligans at the club.

I must finish now, as there are decorations to be done at the church, and I have to lend a hand.

XI

TREATS

YOU will be bored with me no doubt, but there is only one subject to write to you about just now, and that is "Treats"; the air is full of them, and the stations are cheerful because of them. I have been to two in this last week: the annual Sunday-school treat and the day in the country for the Girls' Club; there are many others looming in the distance.

Treats are always exhausting, and those two last week were no exception to the rule. Fortunately, we had two lovely days, and fine weather is, after all, the one essential; with that, the most ordinary games and provisions seem delightful.

The Girls' Club was the first to venture, so I will tell you about that; if there is time

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you shall hear about the other; and if after that you do not write to tell me to send you an invitation to the next treat, you will be very much wanting in enthusiasm.

When the ladies who manage the Girls' Club decide to take their merry charges for a day in the country, they make a point of choosing some very quiet place, where not a man is to be seen. This is really necessary, because some of the girls are so dreadfully willing to be friendly with the opposite sex; they do not wait to be introduced, for if they did, they say they "would never get a bloke." As you may imagine, the men are by no means backward in acknowledging their attentions, and so it happens that if a club girl meets a friendly soldier, she may be sitting with his arm round her neck before you can say "Jack Robinson."

The trip last week was to a perfectly lovely common, far, far indeed, from the haunts of men.

I joined the party at the station, where

carriages were reserved, and everything was done to make the journey as pleasant as possible. Of course, it was necessary to be there some time before the train started, but the girls were so excited and the porters so attentive that we were quite thankful when we left the station.

We were packed fairly closely, four or five to a side in the carriages, but the girls like that; in fact they have a perfect horror of travelling alone, or with one other, as they say it makes them "that nervous." They seem to think that to travel alone means to be murdered; just as some of them are sure that to be vaccinated means to lose an arm. I suppose they read about all the murders and untimely deaths in the newspapers, and make a note of the cause of each. It seems almost a pity that a halfpenny "Cheerful" is not published, giving the experiences of people who have travelled without accident, been successfully vaccinated, and who have even lived happily without a husband! I am afraid,

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however, such reading would be too dull to appeal to the girls.

But I was telling you about the "outing," and I must continue. When once we had left the station, I hoped for peace and tranquillity, but not at all. Whereas snatches of song relieved the monotony of our wait at the station, real shouts greeted our escape from London. All sorts of comic songs with swinging choruses were sung with great vigour, while the girls danced up and down the carriage, till the train seemed to rock. Out of the windows they hung, still singing with might and main, until I felt as if I must dance and sing too, if only to drown the noise.

Unfortunately, we had to change at a wayside station, and there the little jokes with porters and passengers in passing trains began again, men and boys all being ready to have a chat, and give joke for joke.

There was really no peace at all until we arrived at the end of our journey, and found ourselves on a lovely common, where the air

was thick with the scent of the limes, and where wild roses and honeysuckles were within easy reach.

The only man to be seen was the one in charge of the donkeys ; he was indeed the only one to cross our path all day, and though an accomplished master of donkeys, he was fortunately exceedingly ugly and very reserved.

Curiously enough, the girls were perfectly happy in that secluded retreat, and were charmed with the trees and flowers ; they revelled in the freedom and fresh air, and seemed different creatures in such surroundings.

We had a very fine dinner soon after we arrived, and then every one was free to wander about, have donkey rides, pick flowers, or just sit and talk till tea-time. Two or three wandered off to the nearest village, but most of them were quite pleased to stay and spend a lazy afternoon ; indeed, they find country walking exceedingly tiring to their London-pavement legs.

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After tea some photographs were taken, and for the group we all sat patiently huddled up together for some time. These groups always take a long time, because it is difficult to arrange the large and beautiful hats so that the back row can be seen at all; and then again, fits of giggling are so uncontrollable and so frequent that the photographer needs much patience.

This piece of work was finished at last, to the great relief of every one concerned.

The first part of the return journey was a repetition of the outward one, except that, here and there, a girl, paler and more delicate-looking than the rest, fell asleep, tired out with fresh air and excitement; it made one's heart ache to see how thin and pale they looked, poor things; many of them have to work hard, and their food is not very nourishing; and as they only very occasionally have a holiday, they are generally much in need of some of the joys of life.

At the station there was a final burst of

energy, and as we went home we saw some of our party dancing down the street, three or four abreast, doing the cake-walk.

So the day ended, and very uneventful it seemed ; and yet to the girls it is something to live for, and they look forward to it for months.

To me, that singing and dancing were a perfect nightmare ; I have never been so tired after a journey, and have never before realised how impossible it is to control such girls as those, when they are really excited and happy. To have made them sit still in the train would have been to spoil the fun entirely, and one realised how wise it was of those in command to take them where they could have their fling without coming to any harm.

The Sunday-school treat was a much more ordinary affair, and to me not nearly so exhausting.

The children marched to the station, two and two ; there were numbers of teachers

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and other workers, the vicar and his wife, and two curates. We were led triumphantly across the roads by a policeman, and were generally treated with much respect.

Most of the teachers travelled with their own classes, but as mine is the second in the boys' school, and its members are comparatively elderly, I thought they might prefer to go alone; they politely invited me to accompany them, however, and I, equally politely, accepted the invitation.

Of course there were two or three heads out of each window, and a face was pressed against each of the side panes, but the singing was not so overpowering as that of the Girls' Club. A quiet little boy who sat next to me gave me useful information on one or two difficult points which suggested themselves. For instance, I asked him what the big boys who were looking out of the window were so excited about. "Oh, miss," he said, "they are only trying to see their sweethearts."

This gave me quite a shock ; for such young sweethearts I was quite unprepared. My informant was, however, quite correct, for in another moment I heard a shout, "Now then, Tom, here she is ; be quick," at which Tom flew to the other window and waved his cap.

Tom is a nice boy, and his beloved is a pretty little girl. I wonder whether it is a serious matter, or whether she is only a passing fancy. They do begin young !

One finds on these occasions that it is best to take a real interest in the party, and not to look serious, whatever happens ; any suggestion of a policeman-like attitude causes a chill at once.

When we arrived at our destination we formed up again to walk to our playing-ground.

The first excitement for the children was the spending of their money. Some of them had quite large sums—it seems absurd, but so it was—and they longed to get rid of

some of it. This craving was well catered for, and on arriving at the station we found a row of merchants with many varieties of penny toys, and all sorts of sweets. It was a regular Sunday-school treat station, and no doubt other parties were expected.

The merchants did a splendid trade, and many pennies went into their pockets; but from scraps of conversation heard among the children, I gathered that a great deal of money, given in change, was afterwards lost in the field; small pockets are not meant to hold money, and are generally very untrustworthy.

Some of the penny treasures were very curious. One—which was very popular—was a small box containing a minute cake of pink soap and a tiny sponge.

I was amused to see the purchasers of these boxes making use of the bits of soap. They found some horrid old salmon or lobster tins—which, by the way, seem to grow even in the quietest of country lanes, or in

secluded corners by the sea—and having filled them with water from the brook, they proceeded, with great satisfaction, to wash their hands.

Not often is that painful operation accomplished with so much delight.

We eventually arrived at our destination, where we found many joys awaiting us. There were donkeys and swings, rocking-boats and see-saws, bats and balls; and with these the younger children were soon busily employed. Farther on in the field, however, the more experienced eyes of the older ones had found something which caused much subdued excitement; you will never guess what it was.

In the small stream, which flowed quietly on towards a wood, there were numbers of frogs of all sizes—mother and father frogs, baby ones just past the tadpole stage, and all the intermediate members of the family, earning a precarious livelihood.

These frogs were much admired by both

boys and girls, and plans were at once made for carrying some of them back to London.

At last some ingenious little imp hit upon the following plan.

Among the numerous things on sale were some small bottles of lemonade ; these, when the sweet and sticky fluid has been consumed, were filled with water, and used as tanks for the frogs. Each poor victim was gently—I hope—pushed down the small neck of the bottle to fall with a splash into the water. The splash became beautifully less as the bottle filled, and they resembled pickled frogs.

I did my best to rescue them from such an unhappy fate ; but as the alternative was to be tied up, with many companions, in a small handkerchief, which was then knotted and held tightly by very hot hands, or left by accident in the baking sun, the bottle seemed the lesser evil.

One could only console oneself with the reflection that, as Huxley pointed out, Nature's arrangement, by which they might be slowly

forced down the throat of a duck, does not strike one as any more merciful. It may be that frogs are too soft to mind being squeezed; I hope so, to be sure. When the time came to go home I found that many handkerchiefs had been filled, as well as the bottles; but I was able to put back into their cool little stream some that had mercifully been forgotten.

When I ventured to remark to one of the boys that it might not suit the frogs to live in London, he assured me that it would be all right, and he added that a tortoise that he had once bought had lasted splendidly; "yes," he added, "and mother found it very useful for breaking the coals, as it always preferred to live in the coal-cellar!"

At dinner-time the children sat in little groups, and made a great feast with the food they had brought with them. For the teachers, dinner was provided, and for a select little party there was a dainty repast at the house!

Such divisions of sheep from goats strike one at the time as embarrassing, but on the whole they seem to give satisfaction.

I spent a large part of the afternoon keeping a list of those who had used the swings and the donkeys ; the latter were in much request, and only one ride was allowed to each child. If no one had been there to keep watch the boys would have had a larger proportion of rides than would, in the days of chivalry, have been considered allowable ; or, in other words, they would have stuck to the donkey and thoroughly overworked him.

After a fine large tea, the children ran races for pennies and sweets ; a very usual and popular ending to a long and hot but happy day. Those of the teachers who preferred to walk with a friend in the more secluded parts of the wood were able to do so, for there were enough married people to keep an eye on the children.

At last the evening shades began to fall,

and we turned homewards ; the little ones of the party were tired and sleepy, but the big boys were, as usual, ready to begin again.

We were all well satisfied with the day's work. Not a drop of rain had fallen, and though the sun shone brilliantly a cool breeze made it possible to run about and play cricket without any feeling of exhaustion. The only accident was that one boy, while hunting an extra large frog, fell into the brook and got wet through.

On the way home I saw parties returning from a "monster expedition" to Worthing, organised by a neighbouring chapel. I wonder how many church mothers I should have seen there if I had stood quietly and watched them say "good-bye."

It is hard to blame them, and equally hard to say that all expeditions organised by churches and chapels are a mistake, for, young or old, they all love a day out.

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We sometimes wonder where the money comes from to pay for all these "extras"; I suppose even one day by the sea is worth a great deal of pinching and screwing to some of these poor old mothers. .

XII

THE BOYS' CLUB—NEW PREMISES

I AM sure you will be interested to hear that the Boys' Club, which began in the infants' school, has now removed into larger and more convenient premises.

I am so thankful that this has been accomplished, for we have been convinced for some time that the schoolroom was a very unsuitable place, and yet it seemed almost impossible to find another. This is a very crowded part of London, and not only are rents high, but there are very few really large rooms to be had.

I think I told you about some of our difficulties in the schoolroom, and these rather increased than diminished as we had more members, more work to do, and less time for keeping order.

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The last little amusement, which gave a great deal of satisfaction to the boys, was to give a gentle tilt to the desk just when three or four full cups of cocoa had been put there by their owners. The result of the tilt was that part of the cocoa in each cup was splashed into the saucer, and some on to the desk. As the mixture is very sweet, you can understand that it made a horribly sticky mess on the desks, which was very difficult to get rid of.

Finally the poor infant-school mistress, who is a dear, and a great friend of mine, was so distressed by the change that a few weeks of "boys" had made in her sanctum, that she was on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

This fact was reported to us by the vicar, and as her woes were too real to be ignored, there was nothing for it but to find another and a safer place for the boys.

At first we felt quite hopeless, for there did not seem to be a single place in the whole parish that was in the least bit suitable.

At last, however, after much searching, we found a long narrow piece of the crypt, which was full of rubbish, but had great possibilities.

It looked rather forbidding, at first sight, for it was perfectly dark, and very dirty ; but what appealed to me very much was the fact that if we could once put it in order there would be no rent to pay ; that is a great consideration.

The vicar encouraged us to persevere, for he was quite as anxious as we were that the schoolroom should be left in peace, and yet he did not want the club to be closed.

After some coaxing, and much discussion of plans, I managed, at last, to get his consent to the removal of the accumulations, and the clearing out of the place, on condition that I found the money to pay for it.

He is a very good business man this vicar of ours, and he knows all about ladies and their funny ways ; he is splendidly enthusiastic and cheerful, and very nice to work with, but

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he does not believe in giving people permission to run up bills for which he will have to find the money on quarter-day.

This clearing job was no light task, for all the rubbish of ages seemed to have been piled there, and it reached, in some places, from the floor to the ceiling.

However, there is a very good builder in the parish who is used to such work, and from him I had an estimate for tidying it all up. He was quite willing to set to work at once, and in no time that heap of rubbish had disappeared.

There were some curious things found there, amongst others, a pair of horizontal bars, which will be most useful for the club. There was also an old gymnasium mattress, which looked as if it had been there since the flood; unfortunately it was too rotten to be of any use.

When the rubbish was disposed of, and we could really examine the place, we all agreed that it was infinitely preferable to



THE ENTRANCE TO THE CRYPT CLUB.

the infant school, and quite worth using for the club.

The next thing was to persuade it to look a little more cheerful.

That this was necessary you will understand when I tell you that the entrance is down five or six stone steps in the middle of a large churchyard ; that there were no windows, the walls were black, and there was no gas.

The crypt extends under the whole of the very large church, but most of it is already occupied, this long narrow strip being the only part that is not used. At the entrance is a large iron door which can be locked, from the outside only, with a large iron key.

The next division of the crypt, which is now kept for a mortuary chapel, was once used, so the boys declare, as a depository for bones which were dug up when the churchyard was made into a garden. Whether this was so or not, the very idea of it gives rather a grim feeling to the place.

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In addition to this, there is a narrow dark strip of a place in which there are several vault-like cavities, with a dark pool of water, and a suggestion of rats.

With such surroundings I felt that light and a general air of comfort were most necessary. The next step was therefore to find out what the friendly builder would charge for distempering the walls bright pink, putting in many gas jets—a simple matter, as the gas was already laid on—and fixing a pair of strong rough doors across the middle of the place so that it could be divided, if necessary, into two separate portions, for it is very long and rather narrow.

For this again I was to find the money, but it was not a very expensive matter, and I felt sure that the result would be excellent.

This work was all well and quickly done, and now the dismal crypt is a beautifully bright, cheerful club; the pink walls quite glow when the gas is alight, and the lime-

wash on the vaulted roof makes it look very clean and fresh.

One other little alteration that had to be made was really almost more trouble than anything else. We were anxious about the ventilation, for there were no windows, and only one small opening at the top of one of the walls to let in the outside air.

A sanitary engineer, who kindly looked over the work for us, said that the only thing necessary was that a hole should be made, similar to the one already existing in the opposite wall; this, he said, would cause a fresh current of air to be always passing through, and would be quite enough for ventilation.

This sounded a simple matter, and the man who did the work had no idea that it would take him so long. He said that the brick was so hard that when he was using his strongest tool it was just like scratching with a pin. The church was built out of the Million Fund, and no doubt the materials were of first-class quality.

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All the work is now finished, and we hope that in the future an occasional lime-washing will be all that is required.

Last night was the opening night, and, as you may imagine, we were a little anxious as to what the boys would think of their new quarters.

They were half shy of the churchyard, but fortunately they like the crypt very much. We heard many remarks about "the place where the bodies was," and some of the more nervous members were rather overawed by the ghostly suggestions of the older ones ; but as the entrance to the mortuary chapel is round the other side of the churchyard, and its door is always locked, the spirits would not be likely, so they think, to wander this way.

All the members were allowed free cocoa and cake with which to feast the new premises.

The workers are all delighted, for it is a relief, after the nerve-destroying months in

the little schoolroom, to have a place where nothing matters. There are no windows to break, no pictures to spoil ; there is no noise outside ; the walls are of hard brick ; and the club is not likely to be visited by any one except members of the club, for the churchyard is supposed to be locked at night, and only one gate is left open for us.

No doubt the boys will soon find out all the possibilities of the crypt from their point of view, but they are more manageable than they were, and I am very hopeful for the future.

XIII

PARISH DOINGS

WHY is it that so many people object to Monday morning? Can it be because it begins with a washing-book, and so often ends with cold mutton? To me, however, the afternoon is equally trying, because, with the men it seems to be the time for fighting, and with the women an opportunity for much drinking; that is, of course, among the very low class people; the more respectable mothers either go to a mothers' meeting, or to the shops.

I never go into my district on Monday afternoon now, because the nicer people are all out, and among the nasty ones I do not like to see fighting and drunkenness.

Another trial of Monday is the district visitors' meeting, which always rubs me up

the wrong way. We have the meeting in the vestry at 10.30, and all the district visitors, the curates, the nurse, the Scripture readers, the blue ladies and the grey ladies, the ladies from the West End, and the Bible-women are supposed to come then and render an account of their stewardship for the past week. We really are quite a noble army, and the vicar, who has boundless energy, rules us as a kindly despot. Without him, the meeting is a farce ; with him, it is interesting, though in some ways trying. What makes it so difficult for me is that I go in two capacities, firstly as a district visitor, and secondly as the representative of the parish for the C.O.S. I am beginning to think it is a mistake to combine the two, for at the district visitors' meeting C.O.S. principles are looked upon as impossible and undenominational, and at the C.O.S. district visitors are welcome chiefly that they may see the error of their ways.

The difficulty is not imaginary, I can assure you, though of course it is a mistake to worry

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about such things, or to take them too seriously.

The vicar of this parish is a broad, cheery, tolerant sort of person. A priest? Certainly not. A clergyman? Hardly; he is just "the Vicar"; or "the Rector" would suit him admirably. He has a great respect for the atmosphere of a Settlement; it is just what appeals to him, for sisters and a mission-house are not at all to his taste. He likes his workers to live together in decent comfort, but he likes to be master in his own parish. His special hobby is the parish Settlement, and it is there that the blue ladies live. They work for the parish entirely, and are managed—when management is necessary—by the vicar. They are most generously and considerately treated, and their house is clean and comfortable.

But I would not live there for worlds, for they have to do without so many things that we consider essential. For instance, as they all work at the same thing, and in one place,

the temptation to talk "shop" must be almost overwhelming. We gain enormously by doing all sorts of work for which different methods are needed ; we gain experience, we meet fresh people, and we are always hearing of some new undertaking, or coming in contact with some hitherto unheard-of society.

Then, again, although we are all Church people, we have all sorts of religious, political, and social opinions among us ; whereas in the other little Settlement the ladies are more or less of one school of thought ; more or less, but not quite in agreement, for one of them feels it keenly that the others look upon her as rather low church. With us, these differences are accepted as a matter of course, and are rather welcomed than otherwise.

The grey ladies live a little way out, but they give a great deal of time to the work. Their method is to come in for the day to these slum parishes, and when their duty is done to return to the peace and quiet of the country. It must be trying to have to go

home by train late at night, but delightful to spend your leisure time amidst such pleasant surroundings.

The West End ladies come down to us in pretty frocks and feathered hats; they are very smart and gay, and are a great help because they look so nice, and make a bright spot where so much is dull and dreary. One of these ladies, who has a very soft heart, does her district in the good old-fashioned way, and loves to help the people by giving them things. She supplies flannel for the new babies, trousers for cripples, or even boots for mothers when she hears tales of distress. Sometimes she takes a long holiday, and then her "local demon" is given long messages—like this:—

"If you please, miss, if you sees our sweet young lady, will you please tell 'er as I should be most grateful for another pair er trousers for our poor Tom; the las' was a lovely blue serge pair as wore splendid; she is a dear good lady, to be sure."

Or at another house where there is a three weeks old baby: "Yes, mum, I'm better, thank yer; but if you're seein' our own visitin' lady, I wish as you'd tell 'er as I've 'ad another; she give me six lovely yards er flannel when the las' one come."

She is such a dear, so pretty and so kind that I quite envy her district. As she has three babes of her own, I am always afraid she will want all her time at home, and will not be able to visit in the parish.

The Scripture readers do all sorts of odd jobs and pay many visits. One of them tries hard to persuade me to get up a concert, as padding for one of his little "temperance" pills. He is such a kind-hearted, melancholy sort of man that I do not like to refuse, and yet I do so object to his radical, teetotal speakers, who declare that all moderate drinkers are hypocrites, and the real cause of drunkenness and excess.

The poor little Bible-woman is a pathetic figure. She lives all alone in her lodgings,

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and spends her time in cutting out for the mothers' meeting and visiting its members. She told me once that she did her work for a living, and was not anxious to do more than her duty! She takes tea with the mothers, and is perhaps able to get at them in her quiet way, and to suggest improvements in the housekeeping, and the religious training of their children, for she is quite one of themselves, and enjoys their parties very much.

But I was going to tell you about the meeting. At the C.O.S. we are always hearing about the evils of coal and milk tickets, and of indiscriminate relief in general; and we see, by reading the case papers, how often people "cadge" from church and chapel alike; and how little real help it is to give a man who is out of work a grocery ticket.

Well, having digested all this, and much more on the same lines, we proceed, at this meeting, to grant tickets in the most unblushing way. Only this morning quite a packet of coal tickets was sent by some one

for the poor of the parish. It seems very hard that my poor old people should not have their share if the others do, and yet I cannot help feeling that so long as I take tickets, so long will they look for more.

Then, again, the vicar always gives me some case for the C.O.S. which I know they will refuse to help. I never think that he really takes it seriously, and yet whenever he comes to the office about his own cases it surprises me how much he can get done for some of his very doubtful characters. This morning, a man who is known to be no saint asked for help to get a wooden leg. "Oh," says the vicar, "send him to the C.O.S." Then a man who owes two pounds back rent applied for a loan; and he is to go too. They never do pay back rent, and they will not supply the wooden leg, I feel sure. It is useless to send these men up; but the vicar gets rid of them, and that is something.

He is always ready to give me "tickets" for the relief of the poor, but it is no easy

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matter to extract one pound or two pounds in money out of the Poor Fund as a grant for helping one really good case in which the C.O.S. ask them to co-operate.

Just lately we had such a nice man to help. He has been in hospital for weeks with a bad attack of typhoid. He has a wife and four children to keep, and is not yet really fit to go to work again. Fortunately the C.O.S. are going to send him away for convalescence; they are doing the work so well, sending him to the place that his doctor recommends, and arranging for the wife to have enough money to keep the home decently till he comes back. The man is having extra nourishment until he starts, and in fact everything possible is being done to put him on his legs again. It is such a splendid piece of work, but of course it costs money. I am hoping to get a grant out of the Church Poor Fund, and as he is a really good sort I dare say something will be done for him. Don't you think it is better to help

one good case thoroughly like this ; or do you believe in a little bit all round ?

The other day I sent a woman to apply for a surgical boot which was to cost two pounds. She lives in a dirty little house in my district, and she always seems very poor ; as I knew the Church would not give her the money, I urged her to try the C.O.S. She was very unwilling to go there, I must say ; but as they nearly always are, one gets used to that.

She went up at last, and made her request, and to-day I saw the result of the inquiries. It appears that her husband has good regular work, and earns two pounds a week in some glass factory. Well, of course, as there is only one child to provide for, there ought to be plenty of money to pay for the boot, and the secretary very naturally says that it is not a case for them.

As a matter of fact, I expect the husband keeps most of the money, and the wife has only just enough to keep house on. That

is the worst of these cases, the husbands so often earn good money, and then spend it freely on themselves, so that we often find wives and children in great distress, sometimes even without food.

Very few in my district are up to the standard of respectability which the C.O.S. require in those they help, and it is very difficult to preach to them, and yet do nothing for them, when they are cold and starving. At present I go on in the old way of compromise. How we do compromise, to be sure! I give tickets, but only with fear and trembling and many heart-searchings; always, too, with C.O.S. principles writ large before me.

Occasionally, very occasionally now, I do something quite on my own responsibility; for instance, a short time ago I lent a man thirty shillings to keep him going in his "off" time, and he has repaid every penny of it.

Of course I know the people well, and fortunately noticed how thin and pale both

husband and wife were looking. By dint of a little sympathy, I got the wife to talk about money matters. She told me that as her husband, who is a waiter in one of the outdoor restaurants in Battersea Park, only works in the summer, he has to put by for the winter months, and that just at the end it is a struggle, and they have to be very careful. They are not the sort of people to take charity, but they were more than grateful for a loan. It has been an exceptionally hard year with them, and doctor's bills have been heavy, so their savings were exhausted earlier than usual.

It was rather a risk to lend money ; but such a comfort to find that the people were really honest.

This is a morbid, muddled, Monday letter ; but please forgive me, and send something cheery in return.

XIV

RATHER MORE SERIOUS

YOU say, "Is this a Church Settlement?" Yes, certainly it is; the bishop of the diocese has always taken a keen and friendly interest in it, and has much to say about the work he would like us to do. We have, too, a chapel, which we use and tend with loving care.

But every one who lives here is not obliged to teach in a Sunday school, or do district visiting, whether she has any gift for that sort of work or not.

There is much to be done that cannot be called directly religious work; but as it is for the general good, it is very desirable that Church people should take their part in it: such, for instance, as C.O.S. work, visiting for holiday funds, care of invalid children, and the like.

I do a fair amount of work for the Church ; but religion seems such a difficult matter among many of the poor people here ; so few that I have to do with take any interest in it at all. The one idea with many of them is that the greatest festival of the year is the " 'arvest," and on that occasion they are quite willing to go to church. What can it be that impresses this so strongly on their minds ? Is it the sight of those lovely rows of unappropriated apples, and those tempting bunches of grapes ; or is it, do you think, that the poor do really understand better than any one else what it is to be thankful for their daily bread ?

Some people in the parish still sigh for the good old days when, as they sometimes tell me, there were lovely "services of song," when the organ was supplemented by a fine band, and there was a large mixed choir. From all accounts these were indeed popular, for so many people flocked to the church that even the galleries were full. These

people look upon glorified mattins and ante-communion at eleven as the one service it is proper to attend each week ; and in addition some of them like evening service at seven : more than this they do not consider either necessary or desirable.

In the courts where I visit there is hardly any idea of church-going ; in fact, some of the more respectable people look upon it as a virtue to have nothing to do with it. Their tone may be summed up in a conversation I once had with an old body.

“Well, Mrs. A.,” I said, “do you ever go to church ?”

“No, miss,” she replied, “can’t say as I do ; I may not be all as I ort to be, but thank Gawd I ain’t a ’ipocrit ; I knows some as walks abaht with a Bible under their arms as ain’t no better than they orter be ; they only goes for what they can git.”

In that place, indeed, very few go even with that worldly motive, except for christen-

ings, weddings, and funerals ; on those great occasions it is still the proper thing.

We always hope that the members of our clubs will offer themselves for confirmation, and be willing to go to church. Down in the crypt we do not force the boys in any way to go either to church or Bible class ; they are very shy about that sort of thing, though often surprisingly reverent in their way. One could easily coax them to go, but it does not seem quite wise to use much personal influence.

Last Good Friday we decided to give the club boys a service all to themselves, just to see whether they would come or not, and how they would behave. We had a lantern, and some plain black and white pictures of the chief events of the Passion. Each picture was explained in the words of the Bible narrative, and a few hymns were put on the screen to be sung without accompaniment.

The behaviour of the boys was all that we

could wish ; considering how rough some of them are, it was wonderful to see their quiet attention. The junior curate did the reading, and he was so simple and reverent, without taking much time, that it exactly suited the case.

The hymns were well done, for the boys like singing, and they manage very well with one or two strong, steady voices to lead. "Tell me the old, old story" was the best, and it sounded quite melodious against those thick walls.

Next year we hope to do a little more for them ; but it is the most difficult part of the work, and must be done slowly and carefully.

This curate is far better with them than the others were ; he is big and strong ; he does not talk much to them, but he can "do" things, such as cricket and football, and so they respect him ; he is quite young, too, and enthusiastic, and that is a great thing.

I seem to have had nothing but church services lately, for we have just finished a mission at the church. The whole parish was very carefully prepared for it, and all the houses were visited over and over again before the regular mission services began. One thing made the visiting difficult; the people are so used to the word mission that they can't look upon it as indicating anything unusual. The Medical Mission is here, the City Mission there, Mr. Somebody's little mission-room is at the corner of the street; and all these missions want a congregation, and try hard to get one. One of my own women informed me some time ago that as Mr. So-and-so had kindly left her two loaves, she meant to go up to his "place" on Sunday, though she did not often go to church.

We had many services and much singing; services for men, for women, and for children in the afternoon, and in the evening services for the whole congregation. There were

instructions, too, every evening, and visiting all the mornings ; and yet, not until it was over did many of the people understand that it had begun ; it made me realise better how little they hear of what is going on around them ; of the women at any rate, very few can read without a great effort, and so leaflets and notices make very little impression.

What really did attract attention was the procession which went round the parish every evening. The cross was carried in front, and it was followed by the choir and clergy in surplices, and as many of the congregation as could come. Short addresses were given at quiet spots on the route, and hymns with popular tunes were well sung.

This was quite an unusual event in these parts, and I am sure the out-of-door preaching was a good thing ; the audiences were wonderfully attentive, and behaved very well. We were fortunate in having very good speakers, and it was easy to hear what they

said quite a long distance away. Some people have a sort of dread of being driven to church, and then having to pledge themselves to all kinds of drastic reforms; for these, outdoor preaching affords the only chance of hearing about religion. The missionary was very anxious that this part of the work should be continued, but it would be difficult to do it for long without special preachers. What interested me most, I think, was to see one keen little missionary taking the children's service. He was splendid at this part of his work, and the children all adored him. He used to give graphic explanations of the Bible stories, and he made such grimaces, and performed such antics that I often wanted to laugh. It was just the thing for the children; he made them understand, and they were awake and attentive all the time. He would describe a storm at sea with rolling waves and ships in distress; tossing his arms, and rolling his little fat body until we could see it all happening.

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Some people said it was irreverent, but I do not agree with that ; it was just a child's way of doing a thing, and the little congregation and he understood one another perfectly.

He was always very careful that the children should be reverent, and they minded what he said and knew that he was their dear friend.

The mission was a time of great excitement, and now that it is over I feel that what the people in those little courts need is a mission church of their own : a homely stuffy place where they can go and feel at home, and a kindly missionary who can teach the elements of the Faith clearly and definitely, and who would have services that they can understand.

The cold parish church with its long services is not suitable for them ; they do not understand a word of the prayer-book, and even if they could read they would be no better off, for many of them are short-sighted ; with the sermons there is the same

difficulty, for many of the poor old things are 'ard of 'earin'.

Perhaps some day their great need will be attended to, and a Savonarola or a St. Francis will give religion a new meaning for them.

XV

THE CLUB BUFFET

I AM still very much interested in making plans for the management of the boys' club in the new premises.

The refreshment department is to be very superior, for it will be much easier to manage it now. The water is quite handy, and the gas-ring has a hot flame, so we shall not take all the evening to boil the kettle, as we did in the little schoolroom. We shall still provide cocoa and cakes as we did before, for we find they are much appreciated.

The financing of this department is fairly easy, for we can pay expenses if we are careful, and we do not, of course, want to do more than that. The large cups of cocoa do not cost more than the halfpenny we charge for them, and the cakes are purchased in the

nearest shopping centre at fourteen for sixpence. By selling these at a halfpenny each we make a penny on every fourteen. But then, we never know exactly how many to provide, and sometimes there are cakes left over. The only thing to do with these is to sell them next time at half price ; “ ‘aperth ’er stale ” is a very popular purchase, being filling at the price. We learn to be very careful not to have too many new ones, for we have sometimes found that they are left purposely, so that the supply of stale next day may be sufficient.

There is a great difference of opinion, I find, as to the amount of sugar and water required to make a good cup of cocoa. There is one boy who strongly objects to having his teaspoonful of cocoa and milk “drowned”—as he puts it—“in a cup of water”; he only likes about a tablespoonful, for he says—epicure that he is—the taste of it when it is thick and strong is so very delicious. The general feeling is that, for a teaspoonful of mixture, a

breakfast cup of water is allowable, but that sugar must be added. We have to keep a really sharp eye on the sugar, and, in fact, on all the refreshments, because the line between what is justifiably sharp and clever, and what is dishonest, is a very fine one ; and to get a little extra sugar, or some sweets, by a sharp dodge, is only looked upon as a very little bit dishonest at the outside ; many boys look upon it chiefly as a good joke, especially when there is a very "green" lady in charge of the buffet.

The cocoa tin, when it has been scraped as clean as we can scrape it, is always asked for as a special dainty ; in fact there is a regular competition for it, and even for the lid. I can quite understand how lovely it is to fill up the tin with water, and then scrape and wash out all the corners until there is quite a strong cupful ; this, with a spoonful of sugar coaxed from the soft-hearted lady, makes a really tasty dish. Unfortunately, there are no handles to the tins, and they do get so uncommonly hot

when the boiling water is poured in, that it takes a boy with very hard fingers to deal with them quite skilfully. "Please, can I 'ave the tin, mum?" is heard very early in the evening, because, as a rule, it is a case of first come first serve. Sometimes, however, we give it to some boy who is obviously hungry and under-fed, and, being out of work, has no odd pennies. The boys are always so pleasantly willing to agree to any little consideration of this sort, and the generosity with which some of them will stand the hungry one a bun or a cake makes me love them, for none of them have more than they can easily do with themselves.

It is a fascinating job to be in charge of the refreshment counter, and we get helpers for this from the Settlement. The boys are very friendly over their cups of cocoa, and I hear more about their real life then than at any other time. Facilities for betting, how to get the tips, the programmes at the 'alls, and such matters are freely discussed, and we

hear much without listening. Unfortunately, however, much of their language is positive Greek to me, and I can't understand all they say ; I wish I knew more slang !

Are you shocked to hear that, among other things, we sell sweets ?—toffee drops, bull's eyes, and chocolates. What always surprises me is the popularity of what are called chocolate dragées. These are tiny little chocolate drops, and we sell twenty for a halfpenny. It seems so odd to put those twenty little things into great hands ; “'aperth 'er small and good” is the name of the purchase, and we are often assured that those small things are well worth the money.

Bull's eyes, or “'umbugs,” as they are often called, are popular on a cold night. If you try, you will find that a great deal of penetrating warmth is to be obtained from 'aperth 'er bull's eyes. I sometimes find them comforting when we go home rather late on a cold night on the top of the tram.

Occasionally the young monkeys bring their own refreshments. You may perhaps notice a bulging in the coat of one of the boys—always a suspicious sign, for they are generally thin—and if you are wise you make inquiries. This is one conversation I had :

“Tommy, what have you got there ?”

“‘Aperth ‘er fish and taters, mum.”

“You cannot bring it in here.”

“It’s very cold outside, mum ; please let me in.”

“No, Tommy ; finish it up quickly, and then you can come in.”

Fish in the club is quite impossible ; for the hard and unprofitable bits are thrown on the floor with terrible results, and the paper has a fearfully strong constitution, although it looks so frail.

Some of the boys have evidently been discussing our object in running this club, for one of them told me the other day that they could not see how we made any profit out of it. Considering that there were about twenty boys

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in there at a halfpenny each, I was inclined to agree with him.

It is just as well, however, that there should be some mystery about it.

XVI

COUNTRY HOLIDAYS

I HAVE just come back from seeing off the last batch of country holiday children, and as it is very hot, I am not going to do any more work till the Boys' Club to-night.

There are all sorts of matters to be seen to and precautions to be taken as to health and cleanliness before the children can go away.

When the preliminary work has been done, the money paid—and no child can go away unless the full amount has been deposited—and the homes provided, then each girl has to be examined by the nurse, and both boys and girls by the doctor.

You may wonder what a nurse has to do for them; but no one who has seen much of London children will be surprised that it

is necessary, for her business is to see that each head is clean and the hair properly kept.

The subject is not a very nice one ; but, as we find that some of the children are very dirty, we feel obliged to recognise the evil and deal with it as well as we can.

The number of girls who do not get satisfactorily through this examination varies very much, for in some schools the mistresses are much more particular than in others ; and in very poor districts there is more difficulty in being clean than in the respectable parts.

There are generally at least three or four in a party who are sent back, and occasionally even more.

When the inspection is over, the mothers of the unsatisfactory ones have to be called on, told the plain facts, and be instructed how to proceed in order to put things to rights. They generally take the advice in quite the right spirit and are not offended.

“Oh lor’, miss,” says grubby mama, “you

don't mean to say as there's anything wrong with our Florrie's 'ead ; well now, I wouldn't 'ave believed it, and me that perticlar too ; well, I am sorry, miss, but I 'ope as when the nuss sees 'er nex' time there won't be nothink ter complain abaht. I'm much obliged for the drexshuns, and I'll be sure to do as yer says."

And generally she does carry out the orders, and Florrie goes with the rest.

These little reminders do much to teach the kindly but messy mothers to be more careful.

Lastly, every boy and girl has to pass the doctor. The party meets in the schoolroom, or some central place, and there a doctor examines each child, just to see that no one goes away who is obviously unfit. This does not, of course, prevent all infection, but it is the best we can do ; and though some people think it is taking unnecessary trouble, yet, when they realise that a large number of the children go to farmhouses, they must see how

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desirable it is that we should take every precaution.

One of my boys was nearly kept back because he was feverish. He declared that it was because he had been running in the sun, and he would be all right in the morning ; he was so anxious to go that the doctor very kindly let him come round to see him in the morning, and as he then seemed quite well again he has been allowed to go. He certainly was very excited, and that may have accounted for his symptoms. Any sign of measles is anxiously watched for, but, as a rule, we are wonderfully lucky, and have no illness.

We hired an omnibus to take us to the station, for it was too far for the children to walk, and as the mothers are not allowed on the platforms it seems rather hard to let them take such an unsatisfactory journey. We only pay ordinary fares in the omnibus, and by taking the children all together I know that they will all be in time, and that no one will be lost.

The trying part of the business is that we have to be at the station about an hour before the train starts, and during that time to see that the children keep together and do nothing really naughty. When there are many boys in the party this is no easy matter, for any railway station is full of temptations to the ordinary schoolboy.

We take every precaution that the party shall start properly from this end, and on their arrival at the other the children are met by the country correspondent and put into the charge of their hostesses. Each child has a label tied to one of its buttons, or buttonholes, and on this is written the country address.

The luggage generally goes in a paper parcel, and these are a great trial ; I sometimes long to give each child a linen bag. The parcels seem to be all exits ; the string has often no idea of its proper function, and slips about without having any control of the paper, and this, tired of life and worn out with hard usage, often chooses the exciting moment of

arrival at the station to collapse, and we have sometimes hard work to persuade it to make one more effort. I once saw the contents of one of these parcels before they were packed up. Such a respectable little heap of things it was ; they were made of cheap flannelette and coarse calico, but were so clean and suitable. The tin box which sometimes accompanies two sisters is certainly no improvement on the parcels ; we had one in the omnibus this morning, and it was always in the way. It was too heavy to be carried by its owners, and as porters were very busy we had to depend on two excited boys, who were kind enough to help us.

All sorts of preparations are made at the station, carriages are reserved, and guards and porters, who are all on the lookout for their yearly invasion by children, do all they can to help us.

It is a wonderful sight, that crowd of children all in holiday attire. Liverpool Street seems full of them, for half the children

go on one day, and the other half on the same day of the week, just a fortnight later.

There is, fortunately, no disorder, for each party is in charge of two or three responsible people who really know their business ; and each visitor makes careful arrangements with the help of the secretary of her district, and the central office.

Many of the children are supplied by their mothers with bananas, sweets, or eatables for the journey ; they really need some refreshment, for so much excitement is exhausting.

We receive curious reports from the country visitors ; we are told, for instance, how absurd it is for a child to bring two or three white frocks, and expect to have them washed by her hostess ; or we hear that Tommy Jinks took a violin, and had five shillings for pocket money !

This latter tale we can readily believe, for Mrs. Jinks had told a melancholy tale of the year's troubles and monetary losses. We shall probably find next year that she has

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been able to buy that coveted luxury, a piano, in order that Tommy's sister may be able to accompany him when he performs on the violin.

We certainly do send a large number of respectable children away, but then why not? Their own parents can very seldom leave home, and if there are no relatives to take them the children are shut up in London all the year round. On the whole I think the parents contribute very well, and they certainly take great pains to send the children away clean, and nicely dressed.

We are all awfully sorry for the poor little creatures who can't go, but it is better to do what we can and give some encouragement to those who are thrifty and careful. Many very poor children go every year, but some little effort is always required by those who are responsible for them.

In the villages the country correspondent does the preliminary work. That is generally some lady who knows the cottages,

and who will see that the accommodation is clean and suitable, who will meet the children, and send them back, and will do what she can to make the visit a happy one.

Sometimes the vicar of a country parish will act as correspondent.

This is quite a nice job, and there must be many girls in the country who would very much like the work, and who would take a real interest in the children, if they realised how simple it is.

One rather difficult matter when the houses have been found is to fit the children into them, for the country dames are sometimes very particular as to whom they will have. Some only take little girls under eight, others will have them at any age, but they must be girls. Some few dear blessed bodies like boys ! big boys twelve to fourteen. Can any one wonder who has seen them that we have to pay extra for their keep ?

The old members of a committee get to know fairly well which are the best homes

for we often use the same year after year. There is, of course, a great demand for those that are, by the seaside. The places near home are not very popular, and sometimes the secretary has to ask his visitors to be so kind as to take some of these ; generally, however, it is the new workers who have to put up with what is left, for they do not know the attractions and drawbacks of the different places.

On the whole it works very well, and we give and take in quite a friendly sort of way. There are, as in every committee, some difficult members, and they have to be treated with care ; but these have, in my experience, always been in a very small minority.

Still, it is not an easy matter to make all those preparations, and give satisfaction all round. I am sometimes filled with admiration when I see our secretary sitting there quite happily while the battle rages fiercely round him ; most of his arrangements being upset, and no one really satisfied. To see

him patiently listen to woeful complaints, not to say abuse, and with infinite tact and care persuade us to take what we do not want, is a pleasant sight ; his patience is inexhaustible, and his nerves must be made of steel.

He has his annoying little ways too. For instance, it is really trying on a close July day, at the last minute, when one has carefully arranged for thirty children to go with the first batch, to have a wire, "Can you possibly send ten more?" or, "Measles has broken out at X, please call to make other arrangements."

Many a hot evening have I spent in tramping round my district, trying to induce reluctant mothers to get boys or girls ready to go in two days; or in breaking it to the children that instead of going to the seaside they are to go to the country.

Of course the secretary can't control the measles ; but he is apt to make the willing horse work.

You are never safe until that train with

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its smiling little party has really left the station.

I think I have said enough to show you that we have good reason to be glad when the work is done. But although it takes so much time and trouble, it is well worth doing. The children have a splendid time, and they make many friends. It is quite a usual thing for a mother to ask that her children may go to the same people as last year, and occasionally other members of the family are invited to visit the country friends. The children see country sights and hear country tales, and in return they give graphic accounts of the joys of London. Even the expensive trips of father and Tommy have a good side ; we often wish more fathers could be tempted to try country air.

We are always in need of more homes, so if you know any girl who lives in the country and would like to look after one of our jolly parties, and give them a good time, do ask her either to write to one of the secretaries and

offer to help, or to come to the Settlement and see how badly the children need a change of air and scene if they are to grow up into strong and capable men and women.

It is surprising to me how few of the children get ill or have accidents while they are away. It does happen sometimes of course, and if it is a case of diphtheria at a farmhouse it is a serious matter.

We are now trying a penny insurance scheme, by which each child pays a penny extra, and for this he is definitely insured. Up to a short time ago no one had any legal claim on the society for illness, but as a matter of fact damages are always made good, and doctors are paid for. I think the penny insurance scheme is a good one.

Now that all the children have gone, I feel perfectly free to go too ; it is not really necessary to stay here till the second lot go, for one can generally find some one just to see them off. My holidays are late this year, and I am longing to get away.

XVII

DIFFICULTIES AND DISAPPOINT- MENTS

THE principles of the C.O.S. are certainly convincing, but the committee meetings are sometimes very depressing, for there is often such a stony-hearted, cold-blooded feeling about their way of doing things. I sympathise with the member who said that when he hung his hat up outside the door he could not help saying to himself, "Those who enter here leave hope outside." I do indeed leave hope, and sometimes courage too, outside.

And yet how necessary their work is I realise more every day, for I have been trying to do things for some very unsatisfactory people, and, like Bruce of Scotland,

I've tried and I've tried, and I cannot succeed,
And so I've become quite sad.

For instance, I have, for some little time, been visiting a family who live at the top of an old, tumble-down two-storied house of the old-fashioned, inconvenient type. It is a funny rabbit-warren sort of place, and I only found these people by accident. A cripple boy, aged eighteen, was the first member of the family to greet me; he was in charge of the baby and a little girl aged four. He had been clearing up, he said, but with very poor result, for the room was fearfully untidy, and the little girl very dirty. Could one expect anything else with a lad in charge who could only just pull himself round the room, and with no water laid on above the ground floor?

I talked to him a little and he told me about himself, and how irksome it was to be a cripple. "But oh," he added, "I am a prince now to what I was. Yer see, I was in the 'orspital for nine weeks 'aving an operation on my knees."

Before the operation he had a little job,

ticket-writing, and he was very sorry that, having once lost it, he could not get it again.

I saw this boy with his charges several times ; the room was always untidy, but the children were quite happy and contented.

At last I met the mother ; she looked very respectable, and was gushingly polite in her manner. She told me woeful tales about the family troubles : “ never before had they been in such straits ” ; “ she hated to leave her baby with the cripple ” ; and so on.

She then began to explain to me what a burden it was to have a helpless son, telling me how badly every one treated him, this lady sending him to the wrong convalescent home, that one persuading him to go to hospital and then taking no more notice of him, and so on.

What she tried hard to do was to persuade me to help him with a paper stall, or to give him something to sell, in either of which businesses she could start him with quite a small sum of money.

I liked the boy, and he always seemed straightforward ; but the mother romanced so freely that it was impossible to believe a word she said. I found this out by comparing his report with hers. For instance, he told me that she was a Roman Catholic and had been caretaker at the Roman Catholic schools ; yet she informed me very early in our acquaintance that she had been to my church round the corner, and she quite approved of it. One or two leading questions soon showed me who spoke the truth.

As the boy told me his father was employed on the roads by the parish authorities I knew his money would be regular, so I gave no tickets or relief of any kind, to the constant annoyance of the woman, who always told melancholy tales tinged with "resignation to the Lord's will," and other cant phrases.

At last, as I could persuade no one to take him in hand, I made up my mind to test the cripple by letting him have some lessons

in basket-work. There is a very good school of cane-work quite near that street, and I arranged with the mistress there that he was to have a lesson or two, and if she gave a good report, and he was able to manage the short walk, he should have a full course of lessons.

Just as I arrived at the house to tell him where and when to go I met the landlady, who explained that she had got the people out the day before ; that they owed her a great deal of rent, and she was disgusted with them. She knew that the man had regular work, and the woman had very good odd jobs, but they simply would not pay their debts. She said, too, that she thought the cripple was used to get help out of charitable people ; in fact, she had not a good word to say for them.

I was so thankful that I did not waste any money on them, for if the boy is used in that way any training would be thrown away.

Of course the landlady may have been romancing, but I do not think she was, for they do not turn away lodgers in that street without some good reason; the houses are too old and inconvenient for the landladies to be very particular.

It just serves me right for considering the case at all without applying to the C.O.S., for there, I dare say, I could have heard something about the family history.

That is one disappointment.

My next mistake was not a very terrible one, and yet it struck me forcibly.

I fancy I must have told you that to the casual beggar in the street we are taught to give nothing whatever, unless we are prepared to go into all the circumstances and do the thing properly, which, of course, we are not generally anxious to do.

I thought I had really mastered this somewhat elementary rule, and yet the other day I was taken in again. I was hurrying along in the morning, very much occupied with

the work in hand, when a shabby little body stopped me, and in a gentle voice asked me for a halfpenny. She said she was very tired ; she had lost her purse, and she wanted to take a halfpenny 'bus over the bridge.

Well, she certainly looked hot, and I know those bridges are very long when you are tired ; so, being off my guard, and not on the lookout for booby-traps, I took a halfpenny out of my pocket, and put it into that shabby cotton-gloved hand.

Just as I did it the cunning look in the little eyes rather struck me, and lo and behold, as the fingers opened, I saw another halfpenny in the palm.

Think of the work done in begging those coins ! I have often wondered how many she pocketed in a day. Poor old thing ! could there be a more pathetic way of getting 'a living ?

That just shows how weak one is, and how difficult it is not to give.

My last woe is that my godson, whom I always looked upon as a good little boy, is breaking the record for naughtiness in a hospital ward. He was suddenly taken ill with rheumatic fever, and all the nurses tell me how tiresome he is—really the naughtiest boy they ever remember. He is only ten, and as he lies there asleep, with such a sad, white little face on the pillow, I can hardly believe that the report is true.

He has not had much of a chance, poor little fellow, for his father, who is a cab-driver, drinks heavily. Some time ago he lost his licence, and since then the wife and children have had very little food and clothing. The child's illness is said to have been brought on by want of food, and chill caused by large holes in his boots.

I tried to win the sister's sympathy for him by telling her how badly he had fared at home, but she declares that very smartly dressed relations come to see him, bringing with them bags of apples, chocolates, and

grapes ; with these his digestion is upset, and he is not able to eat his food.

It really is annoying, but it is just the sort of thing I can believe about them, for the stupid, soft-hearted mother has spoiled all her children, and together they have wasted their substance.

In spite of these dreadful and mortifying reports about his conduct, I still have hopes for my godson, for he chose a pair of boots rather than a book or gun for his Christmas present, and at ten years old books and toys are very tempting. Then, too, the greatest sinners are said to make the bravest saints, which is cheering.

Under the kindly discipline of the hospital perhaps he will learn some useful lessons as he lies there day by day ; and as he is to go to a convalescent home, his little body will be given another chance. The problem then will be how to help him to gain self-respect, and make a career for himself.

There, you have a long list of woes. I

wonder how much harm we do by our work, and whether the poor would be better off if there were no charitable people in the world ; one is sometimes inclined to think so. And yet there is a great deal in the Bible about the duty of almsgiving.

I wonder whether you will forgive my presumption if I draw your attention to my own C.O.S. interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan. I think it really is quite good.

We may suppose that the priest and Levite were on their way to work ; they had no time to waste, and were possibly on foot. The priest, knowing that he was due elsewhere, and that he could not help the wounded man, did not even indulge his curiosity by looking at him. The Levite did just look, but seeing he could do nothing he went on his way. Both men trusting to a kindly Providence to send the right friend to the poor man.

Then came the Samaritan, who had a

beast, wine, and oil ; he was quite able to render assistance, and he did so on really excellent lines. First he took much trouble to bind up the man's wounds before he moved him, and then having found a safe refuge, and some one to attend to him, he left enough money for his future needs.

Perhaps the "Go, and do thou likewise" means that we are to go steadily on with our ordinary work, and are only to try and help other people when we have time and means to do the work properly.

After seeing the result of too much kindness and interference with other people's business, one turns to the C.O.S. with a sigh of relief ; so after beginning with a curse I end with a blessing !

XVIII

THE GIRLS' CLUB OPPOSITE

YESTERDAY was a red-letter day in the history of the Girls' Club opposite, and now that the festivities are over, we feel that, for a day or two at least, we can breathe again.

This yearly event, in which we take great pride and interest, is the drilling and singing competition, which is organised by the Union of Girls' Clubs.

This particular club is such an interesting place. It is managed partly by a committee, but chiefly by two ladies who live on the premises, and who give nearly all their time to the work. The house is very convenient, for it was originally built for some sort of club, and it has two very large rooms, which are light and airy.

It is a club for factory or rough girls, as

distinct from the G.F.S. members, or those of a superior class. There are really three clubs, the Senior, Junior, and Baby; but as each one is the feeder for the one above it, they are all worked on the same lines.

Some of the members come from really awful homes, and it must be a comfort to them to be able to turn in there on a cold evening, and get comfortably warm. How they do sit over the fire, to be sure !

They are mostly quite cheerful and happy, for, as a matter of fact, they only spend a few hours at home ; they go to the factories very early, and only return quite late at night.

Every now and then one comes across a sad and depressed member ; for instance, there is one poor thing who lives at home all alone with her old father ; he is a cobbler by trade, but he gets very little to do ; the girl often looks perished with cold, and half starved. Bank holidays are times of special terror for her, and she looks upon them as far more

of a curse than a blessing for working people in general.

I fancy her father makes a point of spending all his earnings in drink on those important occasions, and as his poor weak daughter is quite unable to control him, she naturally dreads the result.

One of the terrors of the club is a girl with large black eyes, black hair, which is dressed with a very large, thick, closely curled fringe, a swarthy complexion, and a very broad smile. Her taste in dress is decidedly cheerful, her favourite costume being a bright red gown, with which she wears a large feather hat.

She really is a person to be reckoned with ; she has so much influence, and such a strong will, that she can literally turn the club upside down ; and when for any reason she has been upset, and loses her temper, she is almost like a lunatic, and every one has a bad time. She has a very warm heart however, and perhaps in time she will learn self-control.

At the club, which is open every evening,

the girls do sewing, drilling, singing, and writing, and they have occasional excitements in the way of trips and entertainments.

The drilling classes are most fascinating ; the superintendent teaches the senior one, and her resident friend the junior. I sometimes play the piano for them, and then I realise how much patience and skill is required for the work.

It is wonderful to see those pale, tired, anæmic-looking girls do their exercises with dumb-bells and Indian clubs. They work so hard, and the exercises are so promptly and carefully executed, that it is quite a pretty sight. They never seem tired, but often have a run to finish up with ; up and down, in and out they go, with the greatest delight. One almost expects to see them drop with exhaustion, but, on the contrary, the fun of it all revives them and sets them up, and the exercises certainly improve their carriage, for one notices a distinct difference between the new and the old members in that respect.

THE GIRLS' CLUB OPPOSITE 193

The seniors drill in the upper room of the club, the juniors in the lower; the girls of the upper division begin, and while they are working, the more backward ones sit and watch; then they try while the others rest. After that, a new exercise is learned and slowly practised; so the evening passes away, and, after partaking of a large cup of cocoa and two plain biscuits, the girls go home.

Another night there is a sewing class. This is quite as wonderful as the drilling, for one would never believe that the girls could sit still and sew; but they do it, and quite willingly too, while their enthusiastic teacher gently helps and encourages them. They certainly need encouragement, but given this, they take infinite pains, trying to do what they are told, and to make a good job of the piece of work which has been so carefully prepared for them.

The singing and writing classes are also well managed, and the results are very good. These classes are generally taken by ladies

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who are interested in the club, but do not live there, and they have the disadvantage of knowing less about each individual girl. They have generally more difficulty in keeping order, for girls, like boys, are very apt to "try it on" with a stranger.

All this work is immensely helped and stimulated by the yearly competition ; and it was this great event which taxed all our energies last night.

A very large hall had been hired for the occasion, and the splendid stage was smartly decorated and brilliantly lighted.

Each club had a uniform for drilling, and very pretty and smart they all looked. One had dark blue trimmed with white, another scarlet, a third pale blue, another black and gold, and so on. Each club sends its picked members to compete, and prizes are given by the central committee.

You would have been interested to see how well it was all arranged, and how quickly and rapidly team followed team.

THE GIRLS' CLUB OPPOSITE 195

When the time came for our seniors to appear, every member of the club was trembling with excitement. We have an excellent record, and have often been the winners, but every year there is keener competition, and the drilling is more finished and exact. Other clubs are just as anxious to win as we are, and so we always have an anxious time.

As the girls mounted the platform there was a silence that was almost painful, and a thrill of agony passed through the little group of friends if there was the slightest hesitation or delay.

What a task that leading girl had, to be sure, and how splendidly she kept her team together ! She seemed to steady them, and give them confidence, by the first swing of her strong capable arms.

One exercise after another was neatly and carefully finished, and as the time passed and we realised that they had done really well, how pleased we all were, and how hopeful of success. Finally, as the team descended from

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the platform and we could breathe again, we clapped until our arms ached and the palms of our hands were burning.

When all the seniors had finished the juniors made ready to take their places, and with the same care and attention they did a similar but considerably easier set of exercises. The juniors are amusing and witty, and they had many friends, so their performance was greeted with loud applause.

As each club completed its allotted task the same enthusiasm was evident, and from beginning to end there was not a dull moment. Is it possible, we think, as we sit there watching them, that these smart, nice-looking girls, with their pleasant smiles and kindly manners, are some of the factory hands that we so often groan over and feel hopeless about. It is really wonderful, and just shows how much nerve, enthusiasm, and ability is in them that they can attain to such a pitch of perfection, when the only time they have is the evening after a hard day's work.

But besides the drilling there was a singing competition. Some song is selected each year, and there is a prize for the best class. When our eyes were thrilled but tired with watching the ceaseless waving and tossing of those bars and clubs, we could lend our ears to the quick rise and fall of the music.

Our singing class is only an elementary one at present, so we were not competing last night, but the girls, unlike many more skilful artists, were keen to listen to the other classes; many of them love music, and by listening they gain some idea of the general standard that is required.

In another room the sewing was laid out for inspection. All sorts of garments were sent in by the various clubs, and each one was neatly labelled with the name and address of the competitor.

We won several prizes, more than ever before, to our great delight. We have some really good members now, and it is a great encouragement to them to win a prize.

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Once more our seniors are head of the drilling, and the juniors did extremely well; and so the teams, their friends, and those in charge of the club are all in high spirits, and very well satisfied with the result of their efforts.

Next year perhaps the juniors will be head of their division; it is just as well that they have something to work for, as they are a little too self-confident and careless. The little winning team will be difficult to beat, so we shall have to train very hard.

That the seniors were only just able to beat, the second club will spur them on to do more elaborate exercises, and be even more exact in the simpler ones. You can see how useful these competitions are in the conduct of the club.

As time passes, and the girls get a little tired or depressed, they have only to be told that the competing team is to be selected, and they are soon enthusiastic again, each one trying to be chosen, if not for the team itself, at least for the reserve.

So, too, with sewing. If a garment is to be sent in for a prize it must not only be finished—a difficult matter at all times—but it must be well done from first stitch to last. Hands must be carefully washed, the material must not be crushed, but should be held lightly and daintily ; the teacher's directions as to the making need to be listened to and carefully followed, and so on. Every bit of this is valuable to these, as it must be to any girls.

I do hope I shall be able to see the competition again next year, and that we shall do well. To lose our place would be an awful calamity, and I can't imagine what would happen ; I really think the club would be bathed in tears. And yet, I was rather struck with the manner of the teams towards one another, for although each was so anxious to win, there was no sign of jealousy or irritation among the losers ; every one was perfectly good-tempered and polite. The great audience of sympathising friends, too, was not only well behaved but vastly interesting, for

in each group one saw the same feeling of *esprit de corps*; there were no solitary and lonely ones, but every girl seemed to have some one to encourage her, some one to applaud.

To those who have the management of the clubs these evenings are a great all-round encouragement, for however hopeless a girl appears on ordinary evenings, the improvement in her is sure to make itself felt when she is trying to uphold the honour of her club in the yearly competition.

In the autumn I have been asked to help some of the girls to get up a small cantata for the Christmas treat; it will be a pleasant piece of work I know, for they all love acting. Many rehearsals will be necessary, but as there is so much time there will be no difficulty about that.

This is a long letter, but I hope it will make you long to see the Girls' Club opposite.

XIX

THE CRYPT AGAIN

THANK you awfully for the lovely box of books that you have so kindly sent for the boys ; they will be delighted with them, for they love pictures, and these have such fascinating ones with such nice large print under them.

The club is growing slowly and steadily, and I have great hopes that some day it will be self-supporting.

Since we moved into the new premises it has been known as the "Crypt Club" ; it is more convenient for dealings with other clubs to have a definite name, and I think this is a very uncommon one ; don't you ?

The boys come much more regularly than they did, and the elder ones seem to be

more trustworthy and responsible than they were in the schoolroom.

They still think nervously of the "bodies on the other side of the wall," and I sometimes make them shake in their shoes by telling them ghost stories under the eye of those menacing spirits. You could easily hear a pin drop at the exciting parts, and any footstep outside makes the boys jump and almost shout with terror; they love that nice, creepy, awfully frightened feeling.

The crypt is really a little alarming sometimes, for it is so quiet, tucked away all alone there, in the middle of the churchyard. I must own that when I have been there washing up cups and saucers and putting things away by myself at about 10.15 after the boys have gone home, I have occasionally had an attack of nerves, and have retired hastily. It sounds childish, but when it is dark and there is no one in the churchyard, one fancies that if any uncanny

monster did invade our sanctuary we should have a bad time.

We sometimes have a little trouble with boys who have been turned out. They are only banished for quite unruly behaviour ; but they are always angry at this punishment, and will not go home, but just hang about the club gates.

We find that it is a mistake to turn out more than one at a time, for one alone is very much bored in the churchyard ; but two or three together, with their minds set on evil deeds, can be surprisingly troublesome.

It happens that, at the top of the steps, there is a rockery made of pieces of brick and stone ; and at the bottom, just inside the iron door, are the brooms which the gardeners use for sweeping up ; with these for ammunition, the expelled members sometimes stand at the top of the steps and attack the boys as they come out at closing time. It is really very dangerous, and I am surprised there have been no accidents. It

is quite blood curdling to hear those pieces of rock come jumping down the stone steps, and there is a very fierce appearance about the broom handles. Luckily, a sudden violent rush from the club door soon alarms the small attacking party, for there is always a risk of being caught in the churchyard by some big strong boys, and then punishment is severe.

One of the smaller difficulties we have always had to contend with is that the boys will not go punctually at ten, which is closing time. You would not believe how they stay about, and wait for one another; one has to finish this, another that, until we are both tired and cross.

A short time ago the second in command and I put our heads together and decided to treat the matter seriously. She was prepared to carry out her part of the programme, and I was equally proficient in mine.

At last we had a favourable opportunity to put our plans into action.

It was very late, and all the boys had gone except two ; those two meant to stay as long as they chose.

As it happened, they had to stay rather longer than they bargained for.

At the recognised signal we ran round the club, put out all the gases except one, shut up the refreshment cupboard, and in a moment locked the inner door ; then with a loud bang we shut and locked the outside iron door.

We then went for a walk, and left those two to contemplate a night alone with the "bodies," the rats, and other monsters that are supposed to haunt the crypt.

In about a quarter of an hour we returned to the club, and when we opened the doors those two young men were nearer tears than they would have cared to own. Their position was, of course, quite hopeless, for, in the first place, no shouting could have been heard outside ; and secondly, no one was likely to come to the churchyard till the next morning.

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This lesson answered admirably, and we have no difficulty now in getting rid of the last two boys. I am quite sure that the whole club knows about the plot, and we have gone up inches in the opinion of the members because of it. You can always trust a boy to appreciate any well-planned attack, and even the two poor victims bear no malice, but in their nice boyish way are as friendly as ever. The only thing I am a little nervous of is that one day the same trick may be played on us, for we generally leave the keys on the table. I rather fancy, however, that they would think it was taking an unfair advantage of a lady, for they are exceedingly polite and considerate to us in the ordinary way.

Since we moved to the crypt the boys have been working as well as playing; there is a carpentry class for some, and lessons in bent iron work for others.

The vicar very generously gave a grant to pay for carpentering benches and tools, so

we can really work well. The carpenter who takes the class is a splendid master, and he is very clever with boys ; he insists on good work, and teaches thoroughly. I think the most promising pupils like him very much. Of course the four or five good, steady ones get on best, and they have the most attention. What we want now is an assistant who will look after the backward ones, and start them again when they come to a stand-still ; this would not be a difficult job, for they all begin with simple joints, and they learn very slowly. There is no one able to help in this way just at present, for we are busy making cocoa and keeping order ; I hope that in time one of the older boys will be able to deal with these duffers.

Eventually, we want to get orders for plain shelves and boxes ; and perhaps some day we shall have a stall at the Exhibition of Home Arts and Industries. •

The bent iron work class is taken by a man who is a cripple. It is a great success,

for he can keep the rougher boys in very good order, and they prefer this work to carpentering; it is easier, and more results can be seen in a short time. It is good for them to have to be careful and exact, and as very few tools are needed, and the iron is not expensive, some of them may like to do it at home in their spare hours.

We provide fret-saws and wood for a few boys, for every one who comes on work-night must work at something; if we allow any games it quite upsets the classes, for they do not pay attention. As the carpenter is an expensive luxury, we want to get as much out of him as possible.

Next year we hope to have a really good cricket club. This year we have a club, but it is not large enough to be quite successful, because the boys cannot always get off work in time to play. You really need two teams if you are to challenge other clubs.

If only the new curate will ~~take~~ the entire management of this it will be a great help;

it is very difficult for a lady to do it adequately.

We are already contemplating a move into larger premises, but, so far, we cannot find anything at all suitable. We may decide to limit our members, and to take no new boys unless some of the old ones leave. In many ways this would be a good plan, and yet it seems a pity to shut out any boy who wants to come in.

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof;" we shall remain in our snug quarters until something better turns up.

When we do move I will write and tell you all about it. For the present, farewell !

XX

THRIFT

I HAVE just been reading the life of St. Francis of Assisi, and, according to his teaching, all our efforts to make people thrifty are a mistake. I wonder what would happen if we were all "wedded to poverty," and begged from one another when we were in need. Should we ever really do our best work, I wonder?

I know that there is some strong definite language in the Bible about taking no thought for the morrow, and not being anxious about food and clothing, but I have come to the conclusion that the only way to carry out that command is to be really thrifty.

How can a reasonable person be justified in taking no thought for the morrow, unless he has done all he can to prepare for it; when he can do no more for himself, then perhaps

it is his duty to obey the command. We cannot all expect a miracle, and short of that it seems to me that the only way to live the happy life of no worry, is to be as careful and far-seeing as possible.

So you see I can teach thrift with a clear conscience. We are really keen about it here, for in the present day the evils of spending are so very apparent.

There are many ways in which people may be persuaded to be thrifty, and a properly qualified district visitor is supposed to know enough about the subject to be able to suggest it, in some practical form, to the people she visits. •

At the C.O.S. it is a matter of great importance, for instance, whether a man who applies for relief is in a good club or not ; if he is not, he has difficulty in getting help, and it is only given on condition that he joins one of the Friendly Societies directly he is on his legs again.

Of clubs and societies there are many varie-

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ties, and those who have to advise make a regular study of them all, of their advantages, and the payments required.

I suppose "Our Christmas Goose" Club is one of the lowest forms, for it only means that a man contributes so much a week in order that he may feast on a goose, and other dainties of a more spirituous nature, at Christmas time—the "Goose Club" exists in many forms, but the principle is always the same. The only thing to be said for it is that it is better than wasting all the money on drink, for the family do, at any rate, have a taste of the goose.

Then there are Slate Clubs of various kinds. These are very often parochial, and in some places are a great institution—I used to think they were most useful, and really the best kind of club for men to join; but experts say that they are not always to be recommended, because there is a strong element of speculation about them, and they advise any parish in need of a club to start a branch of one

of the good Friendly Societies. Slate Clubs share out at Christmas, and it seems to stand to reason that if in the good years the surplus is all paid out, there can't be any reserve for times of much sickness, or an epidemic. This sharing out makes them much more tempting to the average man, for in the first-class clubs the money, once paid in, remains in, and is only available under certain definite circumstances, such as sickness or death.

I know very little about the subject really, but we are taught that a man who for twenty or thirty years has been a member of Foresters, Oddfellows, Hearts of Oak, and such societies, is to be respected. These are the men who are the hope of the C.O.S., and to them it will often lend its generous aid in times of exceptional distress ; they are easy to help in one way, for, as a rule, they are eager to be independent again after some illness or misfortune.

The means for encouraging thrift to which we give most time is the savings bank. Some people contend that it is much better for each

depositor to take his or her own money to the bank. We find, however, that the women are often ignorant, and very shy of forms and writing ; thus the only way to make them save is for a lady to call regularly every morning, and deposit the money for them, helping them also to fill in the notices when they wish to withdraw.

There are several banks for small savings. Firstly, the Post Office, which is under Government, and therefore very safe. Then the National Penny Bank, of which there are many branches, but only in London ; with this, one great advantage is that you can withdraw up to ten pounds without notice. Lastly, the smaller local banks.

On the whole we prefer to collect for the Post Office. We take certain districts, and visit them regularly once a week ; at each house we try to persuade the woman to put something in, if only a few pence, and we use the Post Office forms which are made to hold twelve stamps.

It is surprising how grateful some of the women are for this little help in saving ; they are often quite pathetically conscious of that hole which money burns in all our pockets, and they hand over threepence or sixpence with real relief, feeling that, for the time at least, it is safe. The worst of it is, that they are just like children in that they cannot forget that it is there, but very often ask for it out again almost as soon as it is put in ; it needs a really clever visitor to keep any account steadily increasing year by year.

What always interests me with these people is their really dangerous trustfulness ; they never seem to have any hesitation in handing over their money, even if a different lady calls for it each time. I hope it is because we all look so transparently honest, but I am afraid it is their happy-go-lucky way.

They hand out pennies at the door for all sorts of odd insurances and other speculations. One woman told me how lucky it was that she had joined the " Penny Lawyer "

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Society just the day before she had been cheated by a neighbour, for, she added, the legal help would come in most usefully. I do wonder what the legal help amounted to.

This collecting work sounds easy; but you do not know how trying it is, on a really wet morning, when you have dress, umbrella, and books to hold, to have also to fix those precious stamps on the flimsy little forms; the stamps will stick together, or they stick to the book, or the forms get wet and name and address are all blurred. Then, too, it is easy to lose the stamps; they are so slippery that, however carefully you put them in, they are always ready to drop out and blow away.

Fortunately for every one, each collector has to pay for her own carelessness or stupidity; the accounts are all done by the Post Office, and there is no risk of fraud. The tidy methodical person finds this work much to her taste, for she can take as much time as she likes about it, and on wet mornings

she can always ask herself into the houses, and so do all the work under cover.

It is my fate to be secretary to a parochial branch of the Penny Bank. It is a most successful one, and the number of depositors increases every month, and yet I am sure I shall soon resign my post, partly because the responsibility is too great, and also because the collectors and I always seem to be out of pocket.

I feel quite unhappy after the trying interviews that I have every month with the noble band of collectors, when each one brings her accounts. Those terrible little mistakes of perhaps fivepence paid out and only threepence received because the three looked like a five; or a penny mistaken for a shilling, or small errors in addition, all add up to such large totals.

It is almost impossible to get money back that has once been paid out by mistake.

I have come to the conclusion that the reason for the losses is that, human nature

being what it is, the mistakes are all on the same side. For instance, if Mrs. Smith is given sixpence too little she at once finds out the error in the arithmetic, but when she receives a shilling too much she is not at all observant ; she simply hopes there is no mistake, but does not give the matter her serious attention.

What we really need is an office with a trained secretary who will keep the accounts and pay money out. But as it is very difficult to find any one ready to take such a post, I think it is better to use the Post Office forms, and gradually to train the people to have their own books, and be really interested in saving as much as possible.

I believe you would like the work, for it gives you one great advantage in visiting the poor, which is that you ask for something, instead of being expected to give. After some weeks of regular visiting in a street or building you always come across people who are quite willing to be friendly, and like a

chat. This gives an opportunity to help without in any way interfering. It is really one of the best forms of district visiting that I know, and although some folk say that it is unnecessary, and that it spoils the people, yet when on Monday afternoon you see quite respectable women reeling out of the public-houses, you cannot help wishing that you had been able to take that extra money into safe custody in the morning.

The form of thrift with which I really feel very little sympathy is the awful system of universal insurance. When one sees those poor, white, pinched-looking little babies, often so perilously near the dark valley, and hears the drunken mother remark, with much satisfaction, that they are all insured, it is difficult to suppress a shudder. I should like to reward all the mothers who have happy, well-looking babies, and punish those who have pale, ill-kept ones; a sort of "Well and Happy" Insurance Company.

Even with the grown-up people the insur-

ance money is often rather a curse than a blessing, for it is all spent on a fine funeral and black clothes all round, for which no one but the undertaker is much better off. Nothing will persuade a woman that it is wrong for her, when she is left a widow, to spend the whole of her husband's insurance money on a grand funeral. We often hear of such a widow spending twenty pounds or more—she would think it was dishonest to keep it for herself and the children, “it's 'is money, and 'e ort to 'ave it,” is the idea, as one of them remarked to me.

Of course there are exceptions ; but among the lowest and the poorest the waste is terrible, and public opinion is all in favour of keeping up the old undesirable customs. In the low courts the neighbours expect some excitement after a death, and I fancy it would take a brave woman to insist upon as plain and economical a funeral as possible.

I often wonder how much the poor people lose by joining this or that club or fund, and

then finding that they are unable to continue the payments.

Those hire systems, which seem so convenient, are really very undesirable in many cases; the amount to be paid is excessive, and there is the risk of losing everything if the payments are not regular.

I am always coming across people who are paying half-a-crown a week for the furniture, eighteenpence for the machine, and so on. I have known cases, too, where the amount paid by some poor body to a neighbour for the loan of one pound in hard times has amounted to hundreds per cent., and yet it is quite impossible to control such charges; not only so, but I believe it is quite out of the question to run a loan society on any reasonable terms, because, in so many cases, there is no chance of the principal being repaid. How the neighbours manage to get back the money they lend I never can make out; and yet, to save a little, and then lend it out, is looked upon as a profitable business.

I began with the praise of thrift, and I am ending with abuse of it ; alas ! some of the people who are so anxious to save your money, and protect you against hard times, are only doing it to earn a living, and your interests are not the first consideration after all.

XXI

ARITHMETIC AND CHEMISTRY

IF you detect a trace of self-satisfaction in this letter I am sure you will understand and forgive it when I tell you that a Government inspector paid a visit to my arithmetic class last night, and actually complimented me on my method of teaching. Nothing has given me so much pleasure since I came to the Settlement, and I feel a glow of satisfaction whenever I think of it.

The arithmetic class is at the Working Men's College near here. I was asked to take it over some time ago, and have been steadily working at it week by week.

The class is a mixed one, for the college is open to men and women alike. There are more men than women as you would expect, for I am afraid our sex is not generally fond of sums.

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There are two great difficulties to be considered. In the first place, the students are at different stages in the work ; some have a good elementary knowledge, and are able to do easy examples ; others have only a dim remembrance of rules learnt at school, which they never really understood, and have long ago forgotten how to apply. This makes it very difficult to group them together in classes.

In the second place, their ages vary from eighteen to fifty or sixty ; the young ones are, as a rule, sharper and quicker workers than the elderly ones, so that even when they start together their progress is very various.

As a rule, most of them want to do fractions ; they began them at school, but have forgotten all they learnt. These I look upon as the real class, and I teach them with the blackboard ; the others have to study in little groups, and ask for help when they need it ; to these I give a short private lesson while the others are working examples.

What interests me is the way they positively pine for rules. I never give them any, and so they are slowly and painfully trying to understand the relations of numbers to each other, and the general methods to be applied in dealing with them.

Most of the students are very pleasant to teach, because they come willingly to the class, and are anxious to get on; some are in for examinations and others want to go up a step at their works.

The visit of the inspector last night was quite a surprise. I was doing some examples of factors on the blackboard with the whole class; it is a useful little exercise, and I expect them to do the work while I write down the figures. We were getting on quite nicely, when I heard some one come into the room; I just turned, and asked him rather sharply to try and be more punctual next time, and went on with the sums. •

We are asked to be particular about punctuality, because the college grants depend

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upon it, and with a little care the students can make very good attendances.

Some little time after this we had just completed some rather difficult numbers, when a quiet voice from the back remarked, "Ought not the last figure to be a three instead of a two?"

The manner of the correction was so unusual that I guessed at once that the newcomer was not a student but an inspector.

It was a little alarming to continue the class while he sat there and watched; but he was so very encouraging after it was over, and he came to examine the register, for he told me how much he liked the method and how well I taught it.

Wasn't that satisfactory?

The students interest me very much. I have a man and his wife in the class, and both of them are very anxious to get on, for they have a little shop, and great ideas about account-keeping. As it happens, the wife is far better at arithmetic than her husband,

but I am very careful not to tell them so, for I might cause difficulties at home. Unfortunately, the lady suffers from the defect which is said to spoil so much of the work done by women, and that is that she *will* work too hard. I preach to her about it, but she is so keen that she simply devours all the information she can squeeze out of me in the short time she has to herself, and at home she must work for hours. Last week she told me that she dreamt of the sums, and could not sleep, so I told her to do no homework; but I am a little anxious about her.

The pathetic student is a young man aged about twenty, who really gives me the heart-ache. He looks just like a rough country ploughboy, and it is his business to attend to horses. Why he wants to learn arithmetic I have not yet found out, but I am afraid he will never master even the elements in his lifetime. He uses sheets and sheets of paper doing long division, but nothing ever will come right. His poor, funny old fingers

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struggling with the pencil, which will only make large ugly figures, make me feel inclined to laugh—or cry—I hardly know which.

Besides teaching arithmetic, I give some chemistry lectures at the college. The science students who attend are a very up-to-date set, and ask me terrible questions concerning modern theories about acids, the chemistry of photography, the latest analysis of air, and other difficult subjects. Fortunately, I know that their knowledge is only skin-deep, and with a few judicious questions in reply I am generally able to ward off the attack.

The apparatus supplied by the college is of the simplest description, and small in quantity. Therefore I have some difficulty in doing really successful experiments. Fortunately that condition of affairs suits the class exactly, for it is often a case of every one lending a hand until we manage to put together a possible form of apparatus. In

doing this I can tell them many things that will be useful to them, and they learn what is essential for the work, and what is merely ornamental.

Fortunately, too, the lectures are popular, and we stay quite late trying to make a success of this or that experiment; so late that the porter looks almost displeased with us when we leave the building.

Of all the people I work for, the secretary of that college is the most considerate and obliging. She never seems to be put out, and no trouble is too great for her. She is vastly enthusiastic, and really loves the place, doing all she can to keep up the standard of work and teaching. I would not miss my classes there for anything, partly because they are so interesting, but also because she is so encouraging and so grateful. She is an ideal person for the post, and every one—teacher and student alike—is devoted to her.

Last Thursday I had a very exciting time, for I gave my first public lecture. One of

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the students in the chemistry class asked me to give it for the scientific society of which he is the secretary. He asked for a chemical lecture, but left me entirely free to choose my own subject.

It was just as well that I had a free choice, for I found that the lecture-room had no laboratory fittings of any sort.

Now, as you probably know, in all chemical laboratories there is a sink, with water laid on ; gas-jets or Bunsen burners are available in any spot ; and there is what is politely called a "fume" cupboard.

All these things are really necessary, and I felt quite dismayed at the thought of doing without them.

However, after careful consideration, I decided to lecture on "Some Apparatus, and its Use in Chemical Analysis."

I then applied to a friendly laboratory for the loan of the things to be used in the lecture, and I was able, without difficulty, to obtain all I wanted.

I had crucibles, flasks, pipettes, burettes, filters, funnels, and so on ; and in order to illustrate their use I made a list of simple experiments ; this was a little difficult, as I had no idea how much chemistry the members of such a club were likely to know.

With a considerable amount of luggage, I set out in good time for the lecture-room, feeling, of course, very nervous and empty-headed.

What did more than anything else to restore my composure was the sight of one or two highly respectable, modestly decorated bonnets. I knew at once that neither well-instructed nor self-educated brains were likely to be found under such head-gear ; and so I concluded that the audience in general would not be beyond me, and with more confidence I faced the well-filled room.

I had a tub of water, a spirit-lamp, and one gas-jet, and with these, and the bottles and apparatus I had brought with me, I had to produce what results I could.

What troubled me most were the fumes, and I never realised before how persistent they are. Fortunately, some of my own students were there, and they opened the windows, and took any offensively active experiments outside to settle down. The ladies coughed a little, but they seemed to be much interested, especially in seeing a threepenny bit slowly dissolving. •

The elderly gentlemen who were present were also very kind, and one of them proposed a vote of thanks, and said he was much struck with my knowledge of very advanced as well as elementary work! It was a funny little speech, rather too full of the novelty of a *lady* lecturer, but very cheery all the same.

I enjoyed the whole thing immensely, and I should like to accept all the invitations to give such lectures; but, alas! they take a long time to prepare, and my other work suffers considerably.

Next week we have an examination, and I

shall be interested to see which student does best ; I am getting quite proud of my "top boy," and I want him to try for some sort of scholarship ; there are just a few for the extension course at Oxford.

As I am very busy I must end, but I have not told you nearly all that has happened lately ; so many interesting things turn up as time goes on, and one's circle enlarges ; it is really very difficult not to overwork, for it is when I know I am doing too much that I feel most keen and active.

It is just midnight, so farewell !

XXII

THE SETTLEMENT GARDEN

IT was really splendid of you to send that lovely hamper of herbaceous roots ; I cannot tell you how pleased the head gardener was with them.

We cannot quite make out what all the things are. The Michaelmas daisies, must, I feel sure, be those lovely little white ones near the garden door. The irises are sure to do well ; the big daisy things are good strong roots, and it is lovely to have some more lily bulbs ; in fact, everything was received with much gratitude and enthusiasm.

You have no idea what these gardens mean to the Settlement ; in fact I do not think we know ourselves what it would mean to lose them.

When the Settlement first took possession

here the gardens were a little pathetic ; rather like the invalid children, to whom they are now such cheery companions. The grass was thin and withered, and there were many black patches and few green ones ; the large pear-tree was feeling lonely and depressed for want of food and an occasional tonic ; the earth was gritty, in a bad temper, and very hard and unyielding ; the shrubs were untidy and straggling, and had lost all hope of ever again being smart and trim ; paths were untidy, and the snails were in comfortable possession.

In those early days a useful piece of work was to do an afternoon's snailing, for there were so many snails that none of the poor plants had a fair chance.

The only drawback to this occupation was the difficulty of disposing of the snails. I must confess that I have fallen so low as to throw them over the wall into the next-door garden. It was such a tempting little wall, so low and convenient, and this was such a much better thing for the snails than the other

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alternatives, for it gave them a chance of many happy periods of life ; besides, the next-door people did not really mind them, for they never hunted them out as we did.

There were two other alternatives. One could either put them to death rapidly, but horribly, in a pail of boiling water ; or throw them over the high wall at the end of the garden into the street, and let them take their chance.

Of course, when we were deliberately snail-ing, and got a pot full, we put them decently to death, hoping that to be boiled did not feel any worse than to be pecked to pieces ; but when, in taking an ordinary walk, one found two or three by accident, then it was that the temptation to throw them over the wall was sometimes irresistible.

Now, the snails are conquered, and the irises—their special delight—are well again, and able to hold their own.

We have in the garden lilies of the valley, honeysuckle, jasmine, irises, lovely pink dog-



THE PRIDE OF THE GARDEN.

roses, white roses, pinks, carnations, tall white lilies, cream lilies, besides all the spring bulbs—crocus, daffodils, tulips, squills, narcissus, and the rest.

In all sorts of sooty corners there are cosy little rock plants, and creepers, all ready to come out and smile when the spring calls them. There are mossy saxifrages, wall-flowers, and numbers of things whose names I do not know.

The grass is now quite green and smooth, the paths are tidy and smart with new gravel, and there is a general feeling of comfort and prosperity about it all which is wonderfully comforting.

It is a perpetual marvel to me how rapidly its beauties increase, and what infinite possibilities it contains within itself.

You cannot imagine what tender care has been bestowed upon it, and how many people have willingly toiled long hours to accomplish so great a work.

In the summer, watering alone was a big

job ; but fortunately it was so fascinating to see the obvious delight of the flowers and grass, after a long hot day, with their refreshing bath, that every one was willing to lend a hand.

Weeding is not quite so delightful, but the feeling of self-respect which an hour or two at this arduous duty engenders is so invigorating that the task does not take as much out of you as the ordinary observer might suppose.

For the deep digging and occasional trenching we have a gardener for a day or two from the nursery ; he makes a real difference to the look of the place, for he has a professional way of tidying up which is very seldom met with in amateur efforts. That gardener really does good work, and we could not do nearly so well without him ; he puts in some good honest prose, and we add the poetry.

As to planting ; well, that has to be done at all times, and if a large parcel of bulbs or plants happens to arrive, it is not the least use making excuses to the head gardener, for she knows that the things must go in, and if

you are on the spot it is your obvious duty to set to work at once.

So much for the making of the garden ; but I am afraid this does not give you any idea of the joy and the toilsomeness of the work, or the beauty and health-giving delight of the result ; you must live here to realise all that.

But you may say, Is it worth all this ? Yes, of course it is, ever so many times over.

Do we use the garden ? All the year round, but especially, of course, in the spring and summer. What, indeed, should we do on those hot dusty days, when the sun beats down on road and houses and on our poor selves, and we come in after a long day, tired and footsore. Why, the very sight of tea in the garden revives us ; there we sit in those comfortable deck-chairs, with the kettle boiling away in a corner, and in no time we are rested and cheered, and quite ready to start on another round.

Then, again, we can do all our writing so much better under a tree in the garden ; we

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can sew and read too, and even think far more comfortably out-of-doors than in the hot rooms.

So much for ourselves ; but that is only a trifle.

There are our guests ; to them it is much more than it is to us, especially to the little ones, among whom it is known far and wide.

The invalid children, who are our special care, are more than welcome here ; and many a pathetic little creature has sat or lain for hours looking at the trees and flowers, with some kind and grown-up friend near at hand to play gentle baby games, or tell dreamy fairy-tales. Others have long delightful games with the dolls, the perambulator, balls or books, which are to be found, with other fascinating toys, hidden away in basement cupboards in the Settlement.

Then there is a row of little gardens in which, with much patience and with loving help, the stronger ones plant little seeds or

bulbs, and with great surprise and wonder watch them grow up and turn into flowers.

Many a time have I played ball, or hide-and-seek, with active little people who love, after such a romp, to fill a watering-can themselves, at the tap, and pour the water wherever it feels inclined to flow, out of that puzzling long spout.

Oh yes, there have been all sorts of games for the active, sweet dreams and visions, with peaceful rest, for the crippled ; and surprise and delight for all, in this garden of ours.

But even our older guests wander lovingly round the paths, and if we have a party, a walk in the garden is one of the attractions we can proudly offer.

Last, but not least, for the house itself the garden does wonders, for not only does it keep the back rooms quiet and cool, holding far away the discords of the slums, but it gives to those who sit by the windows quite a large stretch of sky to lighten them, green trees and grass to rest them, and bright colour

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to cheer them ; till at last they are tempted to come down and walk in the midst of the delights that are spread out before them.

Just now, of course, there is very little to be seen ; but there is always something, and even on the dull rainy days the branches of the pear-tree waving and bending suggest strength, freedom, and general breeziness instead of dull cramped uniformity which is so ever-present in the surrounding neighbourhood.

So you see in sending plants for the garden you are helping with one of the best things that the Settlement has to offer.

Our "little Park," as it is called, adds a touch of romance to the place, while the blue cornflowers and cheery marigolds, which are often to be seen in the beds in front of the house, give it an air of distinction ; and, it may be, bring dreams of the country to the poor things who sometimes linger outside the palings.

XXIII

LITTLE INVALIDS AND PAROCHIAL RELIEF

I AM so delighted to hear that you are coming up to do a little work. The present owner of the room you are to have will be away for two months, so I hope you will stay as long as you can.

As you want specially to do something for children you are sure to be most welcome, for the secretary of our branch of the I.C.A.A. is always calling out for helpers, and she can give you as much to do as you can manage.

I.C.A.A. stands for the "Invalid Children's Aid Association," and here we have a large and very successful branch of it; it is, in fact, one of the most important works that we are responsible for.

The society does what it can, not only to

brighten the lives of incurable children,"but also—and this is the encouraging part of the work—by every means that skill and care can suggest to make the delicate ones into strong, capable people.

Our secretary is devoted to the work, and she gives all her time to it ; but there is such an enormous amount of detail to be attended to in each case, that she needs a large band of helpers.

Each child has to be visited, and attended to individually. Sometimes doctors have to be consulted ; often the children have to be seen in hospital ; visits have to be paid every week to the homes ; and preparations for a change to the country or seaside are always on hand. Cheerful visitors can do so much to brighten weary lives by taking books and flowers, toys and knitting ; by leaving some little piece of work to be finished in time for the next visit ; or by telling stories about the pictures in some favourite book.

One little girl in whom I am specially in-



terested has been on the books for a long time. She has something wrong with her hip which causes abscesses and other troubles. Her doctor hopes that she will soon be completely cured, but she has suffered a great deal in her little life. She has had two or three operations, has been sent to the country and to Margate for convalescence, and has in fact been given every chance.

Only the other day I went to see her in hospital. I happened to call just before the time arranged for her operation. She tried very hard to be cheerful, telling me that last time it was not so very bad, and that her doctor quite expected that after this one she would soon be well again. Only by the frightened look in her beautiful brown eyes, and the frequent moistening of her lips, could I tell her real feelings. As I left the ward, the sister told me that the surgeon was ready for her, and I was glad to know that the weary time of waiting was so nearly at an end. She is getting on splendidly now, I am thankful to say.

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In connection with the settlement there is a little class where some of the children are taught very slowly, and very simply, the Bible, the catechism, and the elements of the three R's. One little boy is learning there how to talk. He is by no means a baby, but his tongue is too much for him, and at home he never even tried to speak. Fortunately his mother loves him, and she is delighted with his progress. Another little pupil, who suffers from acute heart disease, is far too delicate to stand the noise and rush of an ordinary elementary school. But she is an intelligent little person, and at the class, where every one is gentle, she is very happy, and makes good progress. Her great friend is a crippled boy of about her own age, who is as little able to fight with the world as she is.

Sometimes the class has a treat; and no one really knows how much these carefully managed visits to the country, or the delightful Christmas parties, mean to some of these terribly handicapped little mortals. The school

children from the West End, who generally provide these surprises, are so kind in looking after their little guests, that it is quite a pleasure to see them together.

The ordinary I.C.A.A. work is always done with the consent and co-operation of the parents, and there are often great difficulties to be overcome. For instance, very often country or sea air is recommended by the doctor, in which case the visitor for that particular child makes the arrangements with the secretary, and sees that everything is comfortable for the journey. When everything is completed, perhaps at the last moment the mother refuses to let the child go. This is very trying, and it requires some one with tact, and a strong will, to deal with nervous mothers.

Perhaps special instruments, or an invalid chair, are required ; these are far too expensive for slender incomes, but very often the society will make a grant, or arrange for a loan, if the case is suitable.

Many costly and elaborate arrangements are

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now made at public expense for the training of invalids ; but I cannot help feeling that in many cases the amateur way, where the children have to make an effort to come to school, and the mother is taught to do her part, is more suitable. Some few of the children profit by skilled instruction, but for most of them any real education or training is impossible ; for them life must be a struggle, and to learn to make an effort while they are young seems the best sort of preparation for the future.

When you come up you will soon learn more than I can tell you about the work. I know it is interesting, and very well done, because people are always willing to help, when the secretary is short-handed.

I hope you will do some C.O.S. work as well, and I should like you to come to a parochial relief committee, which is a sort of combination of parochial work, district visiting, and C.O.S. which interests me very much indeed.

It differs from the C.O.S. in being parochial, and on Church lines ; and from the ordinary district visitors' meeting in admitting what I call the scientific method into its doings, and adopting C.O.S. rules in the inquiry into the circumstances of those who apply for help, and in the method of assisting those who are considered worthy.

- The meetings are held in a sort of parochial room, or council chamber ; the clergy, district visitors, churchwardens, and others interested in the work come to them, and in addition a representative from the C.O.S. committee of the district.

I will try and explain the method of work as far as I understand it.

There is a secretary of the committee, and it is her business to take down the cases, make inquiries, and have the facts necessary for the consideration of each case ready to be presented at the next meeting. This secretary has been trained by the C.O.S., and she knows her business.

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At the meetings each case is carefully considered, and the possibilities of permanent improvement are discussed.

If it is considered desirable to help any one, the plan for doing so is then arranged. The secretary is in close touch with the C.O.S. office of the district, and there she receives any assistance she requires in the work.

For the carrying out of instructions she has a band of district visitors, who are only allowed to give relief if it is sanctioned in this way by the committee.

What has to be done is done thoroughly and adequately, and occasional grocery or meat tickets are unknown.

In connection with the work there is a parish kitchen; and in sick or convalescent cases, where extra nourishment is required, good, well-prepared food can be supplied by the cook. In destitute cases, too, food can be given while inquiries are being made. To this kitchen members of the congregation are often willing to send gifts in kind; for instance,

I heard of a man who gave six sides of bacon. He was a wholesale provision merchant, and this was his way of helping the work. A very useful way, too, wasn't it?

I think it is a splendid thing to have a kitchen like that, for it is always a difficult matter to get suitable food for the sick. Good beef-tea is very expensive to buy, and I have always found that the poor people drink it all up in no time, because it is so thin. I have been driven to buy beef-gravy at a cook-shop after the dinner-hour; this is the liquor in which the beef has been stewing, and our district nurse says it is just the thing for her strong patients, who cannot take meat, but who need "good support"; it is cheap, strong, and it has some "body" in it. This is, however, only a make-shift, and it must be a great help to the nurse, to be able to carry out the doctor's orders, and give well cooked, suitable nourishment.

I fancy the vicar has very little difficulty in raising funds for this part of his work,

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for the business men in the congregation—and in that congregation there are many business men—appreciate such careful and judicious use of their money, and they are only too glad to help in any really good cause.

I have only been to this committee for a short time, but it seems to me that this method must appeal very strongly to those who think that the Church should attend to the bodily as well as the spiritual needs of her people. Spiritual needs are recognised, too, in that parish, for the teaching is "Catholic" though not "Roman."

I am sure your time will be very fully occupied while you are here, for there are so many opportunities for studying the different methods of teaching, relieving, amusing, and generally caring for the poor, that you are far more tempted to do too much than too little.

If you really like the work, and decide to come here, you will be able to begin regular training after Christmas.

Some people prefer municipal work, such as being guardians or school managers ; but this, though fascinating, is difficult, and needs much experience and training ; especially in these days when there are so many serious defects in the administration of the Poor Law.

Yes, we are full up now ; we always are in the winter months. In the summer there is not so much to do, and every one is glad to get away, so that is the time when we have empty rooms. We still have one little guest-room, but it is nearly always occupied in the winter. You are to be at the top of the house, looking over the garden ; it is only a little room, but it is nice and quiet.

XXIV

M O R A L

NEXT week I am going home for a long holiday, and this letter is just to say good-bye. The very thought of the country with its fresh air and sweet scents does my spirit good, and I almost hope we shall have some nice splashy rain, so that I can go out in it, and fancy that my whole being is washed clean.

Of one thing I am convinced, and that is that the workers here need rest and refreshment at frequent intervals ; for, alas ! we all, I think, at one time or another, suffer from what are politely called "nerves." They may be bad-tempered or disappointed nerves, dyspeptic or even hysterical nerves—though the latter are fortunately rare—and lastly, and very generally, tired and highly strung nerves ;

but, in whichever form they appear, they are always terrible. The only hope for the salvation of the patient, and her suffering fellow-workers, is that she shall at once recognise the need for pills, tonic, or change of air or scene as the case may be, and apply the remedy speedily. It sounds prosaic, but there is no doubt about the nature of this evil. Fortunately, we all know quite well that our time for disappointment and depression may come any day, when we shall need kindly and indulgent friends, and so we are very sympathetic (though silently and not obtrusively so) and understanding to one another, and we deal very gently with those troublesome nerves.

For me, home and country air are a very satisfactory cure, and I need them badly now.

Another great advantage of a holiday is that it gives one time to think. When I first began to work here I found so much to see and hear, I was so keenly interested in it all that I had no leisure or inclination to pause

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and reflect, and as time went on one piece of work led to another, and that extended and showed other things to be done, until every minute of my time was taken up ; and lately I have been working at top speed. But still, the call for help comes to us, still, important posts are waiting for secretaries, numbers of evils are still crying out to be remedied, and the exact moment for this or that work to be started is always arriving.

What, one asks, in a moment of despair, is to be the end of it all ; when can we stand and say, " This is enough " ?

During my last holiday I began to realise that to undertake more than one is able to do really well and carefully is a mistake, for, to do a thing badly is, I think, worse than not to do it all.

And yet, how few of us there are who carefully and thoroughly, patiently and with careful attention to detail, do the work that we undertake. There are always those who are good-natured and adaptable ; many who

are really religious ; but only one here and there who is punctual and methodical, and can be quite depended upon. These last, I think, are choice souls.

To be punctual. What is that alone worth ? If only the curate who constantly arrives a little late to take an early service could see a photograph of the tempers he has ruffled, or follow to their work those toilers whose day he has started so badly for them, I think it would be a surprise to him. How utterly contemptible we feel, too, when, after making an appointment, we keep busy people waiting. And yet, with so much to do, it is almost impossible to be even generally punctual.

Then, again, to be methodical ; how difficult it is to most of us when we are overworked. Our accounts, if we keep any, are always in arrears, and we are generally "short," far more "short" than we care to be, for money is apt to slip away here, where there are so many temptations to spend, unless it is carefully watched,

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Our letters are hopelessly neglected ; questions are left unanswered, and those old friends who love a long chatty epistle are left uncared for and unnoticed.

Our papers, too ; how untidy they become when we have no spare time to put them in order ; how we hunt for that important address, or for that prospectus which we obtained with so much difficulty. We waste hours looking for things ; but with so much to do it is extremely difficult to be tidy.

As to our clothes, I draw a veil over those ; but it *is* expensive to have to buy more stockings because all those we possess have not one but many holes in them. ,

Lastly, what poor company we are, to be sure, when we have so much to do. After receiving a letter or two pointing out stupid little mistakes made when we were in a hurry, how can we take the same interest in what we are doing ; or after a morning, when, having started at 9.30, we just rush in at 1.45 hot and exhausted, to find all the lunch

eaten, and perhaps two old ladies finishing up the last drops of coffee, how can we be expected to talk pleasantly to them? Of course it is absurd to think of it; and so we sit there down-hearted and dull.

All this is demoralising, I am sure of it, and, through it, both work and workers suffer.

If this is so, then, to overwork ought to be looked upon as the one deadly sin to which all workers, especially the good keen ones, are specially tempted; but it is the resident herself who must curb that spirit of hers which urges her to undertake too much, for no work-committee, however experienced and vigilant, can control the eager enthusiast against her will.

This conclusion, though it sounds so simple and obvious, rather depressed me; until, suddenly, I recalled a speech, or sermon, once addressed to us, dwellers in Settlements, which, when I heard it, made me feel a little antagonistic and indignant. The preacher was an authority on the subject, and he told us that

what we came to a Settlement for was to learn, and that what mattered was the result of the work and training on our minds and characters.

In those days I felt convinced that he was wrong, and that what we went to a Settlement for was to *do* ; that the effect of our united doings would be that the wilderness would blossom like the rose, and the poor and needy would rejoice at our coming.

Now, I am beginning to see that the preacher was right, and that what we do is, after all, only a drop in the ocean of what there is to do, and that if we do our best that is sufficient. What we learn is ours for ever, and it is really that which makes our time at the Settlement of such inestimable value.

What do we learn ? Ah ! that is a difficult question, for no two learn alike ; but to us the poor and the working people are no longer an unknown quantity, and we hear about their difficulties, their prejudices, and we see them day by day.

We find among them the same faults and defects which are sometimes spoken of as the special property of the rich. There is the same extravagance and love of display ; the same frequent appeal to the law, and quite a puzzling number of class distinctions ; while there is, in addition, more ignorance, a greater love of dirt and disorder, and much waste of money on drinking and gambling.

On the other hand, we know how many working-class fathers and mothers are just as thoughtful and concerned for the welfare of their children as those who are better educated.

We see, with respect, what a clever wife of a working man can do in a day for her husband, and perhaps five or six children ; how hard she often works, and how well she manages ; how wise she is with her boys and girls, and how proud they are of her. We have seen her fight for her baby's life with the same skill and devotion as our friends fight for theirs.

262. LETTERS FROM A SETTLEMENT

We see that club boys are just as chivalrous and naturally courteous, and not nearly so prejudiced as those in a better position.

We find that we are just as safe alone in the slums as anywhere else ; and that if we need him, the working man is ever ready to come to our help.

Among the aged, touching scenes of rigid economy and self-denial make us realise their dread of the slowly advancing shadow of the workhouse.

In the children, we find, under the dirt, the same smiles and love of a game, the same confiding trustfulness, the same hopeful patience in sickness that have always touched our hearts at home.

With this knowledge, and much besides, we take a new and a keener interest in politics ; we study schemes for social reform with a clearer understanding ; and we do not believe all the tales we hear about the poor.

To understand is to sympathise ; and sympathy induces charity ; hence it follows that

the more we know, the better we shall sympathise, and the more anxious we shall be to do the work really well.

I think this is quite a satisfactory reason for coming here ; and so I will leave it for you to ponder over, and will say "farewell!"

THE END

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